

April 16-17, 1998
Mandela angers his
estors after
attack
ANNESBURG (AP) — South African President Nelson Mandela is in the city with his ancestors after being attacked by a mob of angry bees at the local traditional festival Tuesday. The 79-year-old head of state had been given a "welcome" by his ancestors after told SABC television, Mandela was stung four or five times on the stomach and in parts that led to a young boy taking a bath in the Eastern Cape last weekend. According to Xhosa tradition, bees represent luck, but the bees' attack was a bad omen for the young Mandela.
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US AP — President Bill Clinton is being...
Elizabeth
elp Fergie
home
ford saves
life habitat

Iraqi foreign minister arrives in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al-Sahhaf arrived in Cairo Friday, saying he was bringing a message from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Mr. Sahhaf is scheduled to meet Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid Saturday to discuss "developments in Iraqi-U.N. relations since the Feb. 23 agreement with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan," the Arab League said Thursday. The agreement provides for U.N. inspections of so-called presidential sites for prohibited weapons. Mr. Sahhaf is also expected to meet with his Egyptian counterpart, Amr Musa, and then head to New York Sunday for U.N. Security Council meetings on Iraq's implementation of the agreement, the league said.

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King, Netanyahu discussed 'comprehensive move forward' in peace making — Anani

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held unscheduled talks in the southern Israeli town of Eilat on Thursday on the deadlocked Middle East peace process, a senior official said yesterday.

In more than two hours of talks the two leaders, accompanied by Chief of the Royal Court, Fayez Tarawneh, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, and Israeli Ambassador to Jordan Oded Eran, focused on the stalled Palestinian-Israeli peace track. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Jawad Anani told the Jordan Times.

According to Israeli embassy spokesperson, Ro'ey Gilad, the Eilat talks also touched on bilateral relations.

Israeli Television reported that the Mossad's Ephraim Halevy was also present at the talks.

The meeting between the two leaders precedes the visits of U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross to the region in the coming week.

Dr. Anani said that King Hussein was looking for "a comprehensive political move forward in the peace process" following the upcoming visits of the British and American officials.

King Hussein spoke to U.S. President Bill Clinton twice this week, and once with Pales-

tinian President Yasser Arafat about American proposals for Israel's long-delayed second redeployment from the West Bank.

The Eilat talks are the first held between King Hussein and Mr. Netanyahu since the two countries mended ties last month when HRH Crown Prince Hassan met the Israeli premier in Tel Aviv, after a five-month chill following the Mossad's failed assassination attempt on the life of Hamas politburo chief Khaled Misha'al in Amman last fall.

Since Yatom's resignation and the Crown Prince's visit, King Hussein and Mr. Netanyahu have spoken over the telephone several times, Dr. Anani said.

Cohen to visit Amman today, Blair on Sunday

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen is expected here on Saturday where he will meet with His Majesty King Hussein and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali.

During his two-day visit to the Kingdom, Mr. Cohen will discuss the stalled peace process, the situation in Iraq and the modernisation of the Jordanian army, Jordanian and American officials said.

Mr. Cohen, who will come to Amman after his visit to Turkey on the second leg of a regional tour that will take him also to Egypt, Israel and Greece, is expected to hold a press conference with Dr. Majali, who also holds the defence portfolio.

Mr. Cohen's visit was scheduled to take place in the last quarter of 1997, but was postponed due to Iraq's crisis with the United Nations over its inspections of special sites.

"Issues that he will discuss will include the situation in Iraq, the peace process and Jordan's military needs," said a spokesperson of the Pentagon last week.

The spokesperson was referring to the talks King Hussein held last month in Washington with Mr. Cohen and other officials.

The U.S. administration approved the 1999 aid package to the Kingdom earlier this year, which amounts to \$225 million of financial and military assistance.

Last month, the Kingdom received the last batch of U.S.-made F-16 jet fighters as part of the "Peace Falcons" programme U.S. President Bill Clinton approved in February 1996.

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Tony Blair will arrive here on Sunday as part of his first tour of the Middle East since his Labour Party took power in January 1997.

During his talks, Mr. Blair will discuss ways to resolve the peace process impasse. He will also discuss bilateral relations as well as Jordanian-European relations.

The British premier, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the European Union, will discuss with Palestinian and Israeli leaders new "ideas" to bring the peace talks back on track between the two sides.

Palestinians mark prisoner day with hunger strike

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinians jailed in Israel marked an annual day in their honour-Friday with a hunger strike and urged their leaders not to advance in the peace process until they are freed.

Representatives of the some 3,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails issued a statement calling on the Palestinian National Authority to continue to fight for their freedom.

"We can't talk about the peace process when prisoners are still held," the statement said.

In Gaza City, about 100 Palestinians including Social Affairs Minister Intisar Al-Wazir held Friday prayers outside the office of the Red Cross.

"There will be no real peace without the freedom of the prisoners," Ms. Wazir said.

In the West Bank town of Bethlehem, several Palestinians led by Legislative Council member Kadura Farees set up a protest tent outside the Red Cross headquarters.

Mr. Farees said Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani agreed this month that Israel would release 66 Palestinian prisoners to mark the 'Eid Al Adha Muslim holiday that ended last week.

Israel has not announced such a release but this month freed a leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and two other members of the group.

Mr. Farees said Mr. Arafat had recently ordered that \$200,000 a month be allocated to the cause of winning the release of the prisoners.

In the West Bank city of Hebron, Palestinians held a sports festival in honour of the prisoners.

The Palestinian ministry of education said Friday that all schools would open classes Saturday with a one-hour lecture on the plight of the prisoners. Demonstrations in support of the prisoners were also planned for Saturday.

Three Israeli soldiers lightly wounded in S. Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (AP) — Guerrillas attacked an Israeli outpost in south Lebanon Friday, wounding three soldiers, security officials said.

The soldiers were lightly wounded and were treated at their base, an Israeli army spokesman in Jerusalem said.

The Shiite Muslim Amal militia said its fighters attacked an Israeli outpost near Beaufort Castle in Israeli-occupied south Lebanon.

The attackers opened fire with mortars and guns, the group said in a statement.

The area of the fighting is about six kilometres northwest of Marjayoun, the main town in the occupied enclave.

In another attack, Hizbollah guerrilla group said its fighters fired rockets and mortars at a second outpost manned by Israeli-backed militiamen.

The Voice of the South radio station, which is run by the South Lebanon Army militia, said a Lebanese civilian was wounded in the attack on the Almadhiyah outpost on the edge of the buffer zone.

Lebanese officials, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, could not confirm whether the man was a civilian or fighter.

Amal and Hizbollah are waging a guerrilla war to try to oust the 1,500 Israeli soldiers and 2,500 allied militiamen from the enclave Israel has occupied in southern Lebanon since 1985.

Blair leaves London for Cairo on Mideast tour

LONDON (AFP) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair left for Cairo on Friday on the first leg of a Middle East tour to push European efforts to break the deadlock in the region's peace process.

According to his spokesman, Mr. Blair is hoping to see some movement on side issues between Israel and the Palestinians, such as the opening of an airport, seaport and joint Israeli-Palestinian industrial zone in the Gaza Strip.

In an interview with the Times newspaper Friday, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook stressed that Mr. Blair would not be trying to broker a settlement on fundamental issues such as land and security.

"Of course, he will not be expecting to return with a [peace] agreement," said Mr. Cook.

"But his visit could help to restore some of the impetus that has been lacking in recent months."

The week-long tour of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories is Mr. Blair's first to the Middle East since his election almost a year ago.

The likeliest deal according to European and Israeli officials would concern opening the joint industrial park at Karni along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, the least-politi-

cal of the projects.

While only a detail of the broader peace process, agreement on Karni would represent the first concrete achievement in negotiations for more than 14 months and could provide an impetus for progress on other issues.

In the Times, Mr. Cook confirmed that Mr. Blair would be focusing on the Karni estate and opening the Gaza Airport, which he called "key economic pressure points."

"Both would be valuable spurs to a wider settlement," he said. "If the parties are serious about making progress, then Tony Blair's visit can be a catalyst for it."

He continued: "One of the most disturbing statistics about the peace process is that the average Palestinian income has fallen by a third since the Oslo accord was signed in 1993."

The European Union (EU) is the highest aid donor to the Middle East, and is funding both the airport and the industrial park.

Mr. Cook, who himself sparked controversy in March when he met Palestinian officials on a visit to Arab east Jerusalem, stressed Mr. Blair would play a supporting role to the "American pressure for progress."

On Thursday, Mr. Blair's spokesman was also keen to emphasise that international efforts to encourage peace in the region were "U.S.-led."

And unlike Mr. Cook, Mr. Blair is due to follow protocol meticulously in Jerusalem, visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum and keeping any meeting with Arab east Jerusalem Palestinian officials a low-profile affair.

Mr. Blair is expected to express Europe's opposition to Jewish settlement building and view that Israel must carry out long-overdue troop withdrawals from the West Bank. But the messages will be put across tactfully, according to EU officials.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has made no secret of his hopes that the EU, of which Britain is the current president, will apply greater pressure than the U.S. on Israel's right-wing government to honour signed peace accords and withdraw from more of the West Bank.

Israeli officials have so far rejected EU mediation in talks with the Palestinians.

On Thursday David Bar-Ilan, spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, reaffirmed Israel's position that only the U.S. is welcome to mediate in talks on fundamental matters such as land and security, but the EU could play "a very important role" in the interim economic issues.

Golan Heights Druze celebrate Syrian independence

MASADEH (AFP) — Dozens of Druze on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights demonstrated in support of Syria Friday in celebrations for the Arab state's independence, Israeli Radio reported. The Druze, members of a breakaway Islamic sect, marched through the village of Masadeh but did not clash with hundreds of Israeli police standing nearby, the radio said. Dozens of Druze also shouted congratulations across the Syrian-Israeli border near Majdel Shams to their Syrian family members on the other side, the radio reported. The 15,000 Druze living on the Golan Heights have refused to accept Israeli citizenship since the Jewish state occupied in 1967 Mideast war in hopes that Israel will return the area to Syria.



His Majesty King Hussein talks to reporters in the port city of Aqaba on Thursday accompanied by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali (Photo by Yusef 'Allan)

King: Aqaba projects should serve higher national interests

AQABA (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein has emphasised the importance of the southern port city of Aqaba as an attractive region for tourism, economic and commercial activity, announcing that the city promises a prosperous future for the coming generations.

Addressing a Council of Ministers meeting in Aqaba, the King said that "the meeting in the port city should serve as a positive turning point for this dear part of the homeland," emphasising the need for sound and careful planning in order to develop the Aqaba region in a manner that would contribute to the overall development of the Kingdom.

At the meeting, which was attended by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Fayez Tarawneh, and the King's advisor, Salah Abu Zeid, King Hussein underlined the importance of the time factor in the course of implementing development projects.

He said that the projects should serve the higher national interests versus personal and selfish interests, adding that even his own residence in Aqaba should not stand as an obstacle in the path of the region's development.

King Hussein demanded that the government take whatever necessary steps needed to safeguard the cleanliness of the region and the protection of the environment especially in Wadi Rum and the coral reefs of Aqaba.

The King later told journalists that the meeting provided a good opportunity to review plans and actions already accomplished in the Aqaba region. He also called on the public and private sectors of Aqaba to play an active role in the development of their region.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour said that the ministers passed a number of decisions concerning the use of land, city planning and organisation with particular focus on the old Shallah district.

The question of water use for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes was also discussed, said the minister.

According to Dr. Ensour, the Cabinet decided to entrust a study on converting the Aqaba region into a free trade zone to a consultant, who should finish the job in six months. He expressed hope that the region 'could be declared a free trade zone in early 1999.

Dr. Ensour also announced that the Council of Ministers decided to amend legislation to allow non-Jordanian ship ownership up to 10 per cent, up from the current maximum of 50 per cent.

The Cabinet decided to grant the United Land Transport Company a plot of 1000 dunums of land to establish a land transport terminal for trucks at the Rashdieh district and to expand the Aqaba International Airport.

The Cabinet also decided on regulations concerning the unloading of goods and storage at the port, as well as catering for vessels. It also decided on proposals to boost the capabilities of the Aqaba Airport fire engines and establish a central laboratory for testing goods.

During the session the council listened to reports by eight ministers about their respective administrations' functions.

Tarawneh elected chairman of Jordan Press Foundation

AMMAN (J.T.) — The general assembly of the Jordan Press Foundation (JPF), publisher of Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times dailies, on Thursday elected a new board of directors chaired by Abdul Salam Tarawneh.

Mr. Tarawneh replaces Mahmoud Al Kayed who served between 1985 and 1988 and since 1990 as chairman representing the private sector. Mr. Al Kayed was also chief editor between 1976-1986.

The members of the new board are: Mohammad Al Amad, who was also elected vice chairman, Ibrahim Abul Ragheb, Azmi Mahmoud Al Kayed and a representative of the Arab Bank (all from the private sector). The other members representing the public sector's Social Security Corporation include Hisham Al Haj Hassan, Fadhallah Amrani, Ali Tarawneh and Abdul Noor Habaibeh. Mr. Tarawneh represents the Jordan Investment Corporation.

Mr. Tarawneh was born in Karak in 1942, holds a B.A. degree in English from Damascus University, and a diploma in media and information from Syracuse University in the U.S.

Until his new appointment, Mr. Tarawneh had served as director of information at HRH Crown Prince Hassan's office. He previously served as chief editor of Al Dustour daily and vice chairman of Al Dustour's board of directors. Before that he was chief editor of the government-owned Sawt Al Shaab daily which closed in 1994.



Abdul Salam Tarawneh

Mr. Tarawneh is member of the Jordan Press Association and the Arab Federation of Journalists.

Besides electing a new board the JPF general assembly endorsed the foundation's 1997 administrative and financial reports and decided to distribute dividends at the rate of 60 per cent of capital which is equivalent to 600 fils for every share.

It also approved raising the capital to JD3 million and to distribute half a share for each share to the shareholders gratis.

According to the reports, the foundation's overall profits for last year amounted to JD2.09 million, the revenues amounted to JD10.8 million and the assets value rose by nine per cent to reach JD6.8 million. The net capital now stands at JD4.1 million. The JPF is owned by the government investment arm, the Jordan Investment Corporation (15%), the Social Security Corporation (46%) and the rest by the private sector, individuals and institutions.

Israeli attack on Cana still fuels Lebanese rage

CANA — Mohammad Moussawi held his nine-year-old son's hand and showed him gruesome photographs hanging on a board near a row of tombstones.

He wanted the child to know that the torn limbs and charred bodies on display were the work of Israeli gunners who killed more than 100 Lebanese civilians sheltering in a U.N. camp during a military offensive on south Lebanon.

"I brought him here to show what the future holds. I want to make sure that he kills Israelis and my grandchildren kill Israelis," said Mr. Moussawi.

On April 18, 1996, high-explosive Israeli shells slammed into the U.N. camp at Cana, killing men, women and children in an attack on Hizbollah guerrillas. Israel said it was a mistake.

Israeli troops have occupied south Lebanon since 1985 when Israel set up a self-declared "security zone" to protect its northern settlements from cross-border guerrilla attacks.

Now Israel is trying to find a safe way to disentangle its soldiers from the region following heavy battlefield losses in a war of attrition with Hizbollah fighters.

But even if Israel leaves, hatred for the Jewish state is being passed from one generation to the next in villages across south Lebanon.

Cana is a potent example of how decades of Israeli operations carried out in the name of security have backfired, creating new enemies on the ground.

"I am ready to strap explosives around my waist to commit suicide attacks against Israel," said Jameel Salamah, a junior.

That's the kind of hostility that is fuelling an Israeli debate over the wisdom of keeping troops in a 15-kilometre-deep south Lebanon occupation zone.

Heavy losses fuel debate over occupation.

Last year, 39 Israeli soldiers were killed in south Lebanon — the heaviest Israeli death toll since the occupation zone was carved out.

Twelve Israeli soldiers died in a single incident when Hizbollah guerrillas from the Shiite Amal movement and the Lebanese army thwarted a commando operation last September north of the occupation zone.

On April 1, Israel adopted a 20-year-old U.N. resolution demanding its immediate withdrawal from south Lebanon.

But leaving will not be easy.

Israel said it would pull out on condition that the Lebanese government deploy the army in the area to prevent cross-border guerrilla attacks.

Lebanon has refused to provide security guarantees

(Continued on page 3)

Israel frees longest-held 'administrative detainee'

EL BIREH (AFP) — Israel released on Wednesday its longest-held Palestinian "administrative detainee."

Ahmad Katamesh, after he spent more than five years in prison without trial.

Mr. Katamesh, 45, left Israel's Ramat Hashikma prison early Wednesday and returned to his home in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

"I feel like I've come back from the cemetery. I'm very happy to be home," Mr. Katamesh said.

A senior West Bank leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Mr. Katamesh was arrested in Ramallah on September 1, 1992 at the height of the "intifada" uprising against Israeli occupation.

He had been banded by Israeli security forces for 16 years and was reportedly interrogated after his arrest for 100 days about his role in the PFLP, a leftist faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) based in Damascus.

He was then sentenced to six months in administrative detention — a term which was then renewed each half-year until now.

The military was ordered

twice to release Mr. Katamesh, once in December 1992 by the supreme court and once by a military judge in October 1993, but each time the army simply issued new administrative detention orders.

As part of the deal for his release, Mr. Katamesh agreed to speak with Israel's two main television stations, which were expected to broadcast the interview Thursday night, his attorney, Leah Tzemer, told AFP.

The Haaretz newspaper said Mr. Katamesh also agreed to sign a statement denouncing political violence, but Ms. Tzemer declined to comment on this.

Ms. Tzemer said Katamesh's release would be followed by the liberation of other administrative detainees "as the result of growing public opposition" to the military's use of imprisonment without trial for suspected Palestinians.

The detention procedure is covered by state of emergency legislation dating from Israel's creation 50 years ago and permits persons suspected of endangering state security to be held without trial for renewable six-month periods.

Under the procedure, neither

detainees nor their lawyers are informed of the charges or evidence against the suspects and they are never brought before a court.

At least 200 Palestinians are currently being held in administrative detention, five of them for more than three years.

But Ms. Tzemer said scores of others had been released in the past six months, largely as the result of lobbying by a group created by several Israeli lawyers called Open Doors.

Mr. Katamesh came from a family of well-known nationalists and his younger brother, Ribhi, was released early this month after serving four years in administrative detention for his activities in the PFLP.

Their oldest brother, Mohammad, was left partially paralysed and eventually died of injuries suffered when he was tortured during a spell in Israeli prisons in the late 1970s.

Four other Katamesh brothers all spent time in Israeli jails.

National Authority officials said the release of Mr. Katamesh followed a recent request submitted by Yasser Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, to Israeli cabinet secretary Danny Naveh.



PIERCING THE TONGUE FOR SIVA & PARVATI: A Hindu devotee pierces his tongue with a five-foot iron rod in celebration of the Gajan festival in the village of Bainan in West Bengal state on Tuesday. The festival celebrates the marriage of the God Siva, one of the principal Hindu deities, and Goddess Parvati (Reuters photo)

Algerian officers were arrested for murdering up to 70 people — press

ALGIERS (AFP) — Local officials arrested in the western Algerian city of Relizane were responsible for the execution of up to 70 civilians, the privately-owned Liberte daily newspaper reported Wednesday.

But the arrests received conflicting coverage in the local press with two other dailies — L'Authentique and Nouvelle Republique — reporting that the officials in question, the mayors of Relizane and of neighbouring Jidjida, had killed only two people.

There was no confirmation of the arrests of the officials and of members of self-defence groups from civilian or judicial authorities.

Earlier reports in the privately-owned media suggested that those arrested were installing a "reign of terror" in the region, 250 km southwest of Algiers.

Liberte published an

account by a member of the Madani family from Jidjida whose brother was dragged off by Relizane's Mayor El Hadj Fergane and other armed men to be killed in 1995, with six other people.

"I recognised all of them, they were led by El Hadj Fergane," said the witness. "Just when I realised that my brother was not the only one to be kidnapped, one of the relatives of another victim told me that seven bodies had been found at Kerkaba," near Jidjida, he went on.

He said the bodies were so disfigured they were unrecognisable.

Other accounts gathered by Liberte indicated that between 50 and 70 people had been summarily executed.

An earlier Liberte report said the arrests had followed the discovery of 79 civilian bodies in Relizane, some of which had clearly

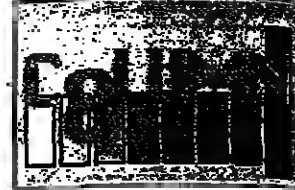
been buried alive. L'Authentique echoed other dailies when it voiced fear that the arrests could be "an ideal opportunity to question the existence of self-defence groups and the right to self-defence."

The North African country has been in the grip of an "Islamic" insurrection since the cancellation in 1992 of the second round of general elections that the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win.

More than 60,000 people have died in the violence, according to Western estimates.

Numerous reports have arisen in recent months regarding the possible involvement of forces on the government side in atrocities against civilians, though Algerians routinely blame Islamist guerrilla groups.

It noted that the "discreet and beneficial intervention" of the state took place "without the meddling of non-governmental organisations or international rapporteurs."



Mandela angers his ancestors after bee attack

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — South African President Nelson Mandela is in trouble with his ancestors after being attacked by a swarm of honey bees at the weekend, local traditional

beers said Tuesday. The sting on the 79-year-old head of state indicates he has been given a "strong warning" by his ancestors.

Also in parts that I mention to a young lion after taking a bath in Qunu, Eastern Cape last weekend. According to Xhosa tradition, visit by bees represents good luck, but the d

bode ill fortune for they sting.

Stallone being honoured for life achievement

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Sylvester Stallone is honoured for his achievement. The Beach International Festival will sal

action star Friday Raton, Florida. "I could be ree award," Stallone, a home in Flori Stallone's movies, ing the "Rock," "Rambo" series, earned more than lion.

Besson is being

PARIS (AFP) — director Luc Besson is being sued by a sc who claims Besson's idea for the "The Professional. Gerardi says there tant similarities" his script and the play for Besson film, also kn

"Leon." Gerardi's say that he wrote i in 1990 and submi a film company run Besson's father Cl

portrays a doome tionship between a boy brought up by dealers and a paic and Gerardi Besson's movie is ciously similar.

Queen Elizabeth II to help Fergie buy home

LONDON (AFP) — Duchess of York is c completing a financi tlement with Elizabeth II that wil ber buy a secure ho herself and her chi the Daily Telegraph

paper reported. Acco to the newspaper, ne tions on the settleme expected to take place the next few weeks could mean that the fo wife of Prince Andrew Duke of York, will n out of the marital bon good and into a new nament home later year.

Redford saves wildlife habitat

SUNDANCE (AP) Robert Redford is sav wildlife habitat. The ac is donating 850 acres land, watershed and alpi meadows to Utah Op Lands to protect it fr development.

"The Redford family has stor feelings about the land, as they want to make sure it preserved forever," said Julie Mack, his spok woman. "If the fami decides down the road to sell the property, whoe does [buy it], does so wil the understanding it canno be developed," Ms. Mack said. Utah Open Lands is an organisation that works to preserve open space and farming land.

By Michael Georgy Reuters

CANA — Mohammed Moussawi held his nine-year-old son's hand and showed him gruesome photographs hanging on a board near a row of tombs.

He wanted the child to know that the turn hix and charred bodies on display were the work of Israeli gunners who killed

Israeli lawyer asks France to refuse SLA chief asylum

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli lawyer appealed to France Wednesday to refuse asylum to the head of a pro-Israeli Lebanese militia, General Antoine Lahad, as long as Israel refuses to release a Lebanese woman jailed since 1998 for trying to assassinate him.

Leah Tzemer, an attorney representing the Lebanese woman, Suha Bishara, wrote to French President Jacques Chirac Wednesday asking for his help in convincing Israel to release her client.

"It is inconceivable that France could welcome one of the main figures behind Israel's occupation of south Lebanon without trying to help this

young resistance fighter who long ago finished paying for an act for which she was never tried," Ms. Tzemer said in the letter, a copy of which was obtained by AFP.

According to Israeli press reports, Gen. Lahad could seek political asylum in France if Israel follows through on its stated desire to withdraw from the buffer zone occupied in south Lebanon by the Israeli army and Lahad's South Lebanon Army (SLA).

"The preconditions for welcoming Gen. Lahad in France must be the immediate closure of the Khiam prison and the release of Suha Bishara and the other detainees," Ms. Tzemer said, referring to an Israeli-run

jail in south Lebanon.

Ms. Tzemer has also appealed to Israel's supreme court to obtain the release of Ms. Bishara, 31, who shot and seriously wounded Gen. Lahad in 1988.

The Israeli government last month approved for the first time a 1978 U.N. resolution calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon.

But Israel said it would only carry out the pullback if Lebanon agreed to security arrangements to protect northern Israel from attack by Islamists and Palestinian fighters.

Lebanon and its Syrian patron rejected the condition.

Palestinians hope Blair can work N. Ireland magic with Israel

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians are hoping that British Prime Minister Tony Blair can work the same magic in Middle East negotiations as he did in Northern Ireland by pressuring Israel to make concessions for peace.

But unlike in Northern Ireland, Mr. Blair must take a backseat in the Middle East to the United States, which has been reluctant to override Israeli objections and put forward a package proposal to break the year-long deadlock in negotiations.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat welcomed the Northern Ireland peace deal and said he hoped that Mr. Blair, who arrives in the region on Thursday, "will equally succeed in establishing the peace with Israel."

However, top Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat acknowledged that the Palestinians are "realistic." "We don't expect Blair to be able to solve everything," he said.

The Palestinians hope in particular that Mr. Blair, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union (EU), can promote a package peace proposal that the United States has so far balked at officially putting on the table.

"The essential thing is the American proposals. Blair should urge the Americans to go public with their plans and should pressure Israel to abide by its agreements," especially concerning overdue troop with-

drawals in the West Bank, Mr. Erekat said.

The Palestinians have expressed fears that Washington is backing away from their proposals, which reportedly would press Israel to cede 13 per cent of the West Bank to Palestinian control as the first step towards reviving negotiations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has tried to prevent the United States from announcing the package, saying the 13 per cent scope is too large and instead offering a pullback of around nine per cent.

The same week as Mr. Blair's visit, U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross is expected to return to the region for the second time in a month in a new bid to find a compromise formula for the package.

Faced with the deadlock on the central issue of the troop withdrawals, Mr. Blair may focus instead on trying to clinch a deal on side issues which have remained unimplemented since 1995 self-rule accords, an EU diplomat said.

EU and Israeli officials say a deal is within reach on these so-called "interim peace issues," which include the opening of an airport and seaport and of a joint Israeli-Palestinian industrial zone in Palestinian-run Gaza.

EU officials said a push from Mr. Blair could in particular finalise an agreement for the industrial zone, planned for the Karni crossing point between

Gaza and Israel.

The key to meeting Israel's security concerns and sealing an agreement could be an EU financed, Germany-produced scanner system capable of quickly checking cargo trucks entering Israel from the zone for weapons or explosives, EU officials said.

While only a detail of the broader peace process, agreement on Karni would represent the first concrete achievement in the peace talks for more than 14 months.

Mr. Blair will also sign with Mr. Arafat an agreement creating a Palestinian-EU commission on security issues, part of European efforts to meet Israeli demands that the Palestinians conduct a stiff crackdown against Islamists.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians hope the energetic Mr. Blair, fresh off his victory in Northern Ireland, will sound a moral call to Mr. Netanyahu, who the Palestinians increasingly feel simply has no interest in advancing the peace process.

"Blair must teach Netanyahu the lessons of history. We hope Blair will tell Netanyahu to look forward and not backwards," Mr. Erekat said.

"While Blair is decisively putting all his weight behind stopping bloodshed, Netanyahu is building a future of bigotry, hatred and violence. He is creating another Northern Ireland here," he said.

Tehran mayor freed on bail

TEHRAN (AP) — Tehran's mayor was freed on bail Wednesday, Iranian official sources said, a day after riot police clashed with thousands of people demonstrating in his support.

Gholamhossein Karbaschi was freed from the capital's Evin prison, the sources said on customary condition of anonymity.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, intervened to secure the release of mayor, who was detained on April 4 on corruption charges, the sources told The Associated Press.

Mr. Karbaschi had become the focus of a power struggle between moderates and hard-liners inside Iran's Islamic government.

Baton-wielding riot police broke up a demonstration in central Tehran Tuesday by some 4,000 university students calling for the reformism's release.

His arrest had been ordered by the chief judge, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, who belongs to the hard-line faction in the government that is opposed to the reforms introduced by a group of moderates around Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

N. Ireland Unionists battle against compromise deal

Paisley: Blair should come up with alternative

BELFAST (AFP) — Protestant firebrand Ian Paisley on Wednesday spearheaded the campaign against Northern Ireland's compromise peace deal, challenging British Prime Minister Tony Blair to come up with an alternative.

Mr. Paisley, leader of the hard-line Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), defied Mr. Blair to set out an alternative settlement for the province in the event of a rejection of last week's deal when referenda are held in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic next month.

"Is he going to consider an alternative or force this down the throats of the people?" questioned Mr. Paisley.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Blair said it was "pre-mature" to guess the result of the referenda, but added: "Obviously the prime minister hopes very much there will be a resounding 'yes' vote."

Announcing a series of rallies and protests against the deal — which would see Northern Ireland remain part of Britain, but give Dublin a say in its affairs for the first time — Mr. Paisley said: "This is a struggle for the lifeblood of our country."

Unionist anger was fuelled on Tuesday by the early release of nine IRA prisoners, denounced by the Protestant Unionists as another concession to Catholic Republicans.

DUP official Nigel Dodds commented: "It is clearly an indication that the IRA will continue to be appeased and we are going to see more

and more convicted murderers and IRA terrorists being released under this agreement if it passes."

Ahead of the May 22 referendum, the DUP, which represents 13.7 per cent of the vote in Northern Ireland, on Wednesday launched its "no" campaign with a series of press advertisements. Their message claimed the compromise accord "leads inexorably to a united Ireland."

Many commentators have said moderate Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble has taken a political gamble in accepting a deal which recognises Dublin's right to a role in the north.

Conversely, the problem for the Republican Sinn Fein is to convince its rank and file to accept an accord which does not enshrine their ultimate goal of a united Ireland.

The early prisoner release was nonetheless a boost for Sinn Fein — the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) — as it seeks to muster support ahead of the two-day meeting of its executive beginning Saturday.

Mr. Trimble won an initial victory last weekend when the executive of his Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), Northern Ireland's largest Protestant grouping, approved the accord by a majority of two to one. It has yet to be passed by the UUP's rank and file which will also meet on Saturday, however.

In the peace talks concluded Friday, the issue of paramilitary prisoners was at the heart of Republican

demands and has so far incurred some of the most vigorous Unionist opposition.

Mr. Trimble's problem is that it is no longer just members of the DUP who belong to the Unionists' "no" camp.

Dissenting voices are likely to be loud and clear at a meeting on Wednesday of the Orange Order in Belfast, which is the province's largest Protestant lodge, with some 50,000 members.

Closely linked to Trimble's UUP, the order was founded some three centuries ago in memory of Protestant King William of Orange's victory against the Catholics.

The lodge organises most of the annual marches in the province which have, in the past, deteriorated into bloody clashes.

However, the marching season began peacefully this week when Protestant marchers on Monday agreed to refrain from marching through a Catholic neighbourhood of Belfast. Such moderation could be reflected at Wednesday's Orange Order meeting by a refusal to pass comment on the peace accord.

Orange Order official George Patton said only: "I'm not sure how many people have studied the agreement yet. It is a matter of their own conscience. Everyone is going to have to make up their own minds."

Cohen to visit

By Tareq Ayyoub

Mr. Cohen, who will come to Amman after his visit to Turkey on the 16th

AMMAN — U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen is expected here on Saturday where he will meet with His Majesty King Hussein and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Mada

During his two-day visit to the Kingdom Mr. Cohen will discuss the stalled peace process, the situation in Iraq and the modernisation of the Jordanian army. Jordanian and American officials said.

Mr. Cohen, who will come to Amman after his visit to Turkey on the 16th

Three Israeli soldiers lightly wounded in S. Lebanon

MARIYOUN (AFP) — Guerrillas attacked an outpost in south Lebanon Friday, wounding three soldiers, security officials said.

The soldiers were lightly wounded and were treated at their base, an Israeli army spokesman in Jerusalem said.

The Shiite Muslim Amal militia said its fighters attacked an Israeli outpost near Beaufort Castle in Israeli-occupied south Lebanon.

The attackers opened fire with mortars and guns, the group said in a statement.

The area of the fighting is about six kilometres north-west of Marjayoun, the main town in the occupied enclave.

In another attack, Hezbollah guerrilla group said its fighters fired rockets and mortars at a second camp manned by Israeli-backed militiamen.

The Voice of the South radio station, which is run by the South Lebanon Army militia, said a Lebanese civilian was wounded in the attack on the Ahmadieh camp on the edge of the buffer zone.

Lebanese officials, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, could not confirm whether the man was a civilian or fighter.

Amal and Hezbollah are waging a guerrilla war to oust the 1,500 Israeli soldiers and 2,500 allied militiamen from the enclave since 1985.

By Michael Georgy Reuters

CANA — Mohammed Moussawi held his nine-year-old son's hand and showed him gruesome photographs hanging on a board near a row of tombs.

He wanted the child to know that the turn hix and charred bodies on display were the work of Israeli gunners who killed

U.K. replaces Illustrious with bombers

LONDON (R) — Britain on Wednesday sent an extra four Tornado bombers to the Gulf to keep up the military pressure on Iraq to abide by a United Nations agreement on weapons inspections.

The aircraft left a Royal Air Force base in Germany for Kuwait, joining eight other Tornados based there and

bringing Britain's air power in the region to 24 warplanes.

British defence ministry officials said the four bombers were taking the place of the British aircraft carrier Illustrious, which was sent to the Gulf at the height of the standoff between Iraq and the United Nations in February.

Illustrious, which carried 14

Harrier jump jets, is returning to Britain for a previously scheduled refit.

"The Tornados are being sent out as a demonstration of our resolve to stay in Kuwait until we are completely clear that [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein will abide by the agreement with the U.N.," said a defence ministry official.

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Pharmacists' association to hold conference next month on promoting industry's role

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Pharmacists Association (JPA) Friday announced that it will hold its eighth conference at the Royal Cultural Centre next month under the patronage of Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi.

JPA President Abdul Rahim Issa said the conference, which will be held May 6-8, is one of a series of meetings organised by the JPA to help promote the role of pharmacies in primary health care.

Speaking at a press conference at the Professional Associations Complex, he said the coming conference, entitled "pharmacy and the requirements of the coming century," will be a good opportunity for Jordanian pharmacists to exchange views and ideas for promoting the profession.

He said the conference will allow Jordanian pharmacists and colleagues from different Arab countries to present working papers examining the difficulties facing the profession and the pharmaceutical industry.

Chambers of commerce federation to hold meeting in Mafraq today

AMMAN (Petra) — The Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce (FJCC) will hold its 25th meeting today in the city of Mafraq at the invitation of the local chamber of commerce.

The meeting, which will be held under the patronage of Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki, is to be chaired by FJCC Chairperson Haidar Murad and attended by heads of local chambers from around the country.

The FJCC meeting will focus attention on important issues dealing with the Kingdom's economic and commercial policies and developments in the local markets.

Mr. Murad will discuss economic developments and the views of the private sector, while other federation members will tackle issues related to trade and trade legislation, the tenant and landlords law, and the income tax law, as well as proposals for expanding the FJCC's executive council to represent a larger number of chambers.

Crown Prince offers condolences over Greek archbishop's death

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan delegated his special advisor, Michael Hamarneh, to attend the funeral of Archbishop Serapheim, the longest serving leader of the Orthodox Church of Greece, who was laid to rest in a state funeral in Athens Monday.

Mr. Hamarneh conveyed the condolences of Prince Hassan to the Greek government, the Greek Orthodox church and to the family of Archbishop Serapheim, whose funeral brought Athens to a respectful standstill as thousands lined the streets to bid farewell to him.

The late archbishop remained at the helm of the Greek Orthodox Church for 24 years and in his 50 years as a bishop, his reputation was built on the simplicity of his strong personality, his charitable work and his service as a mountain guerrilla in the Greek resistance to the Nazi occupation.

Greece declared four days of national mourning and flags flew at half mast during this period.

Jordanian, Palestinian female politicians urge women to continue struggle for rights

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian and Palestinian female politicians have urged women to continue fighting for a greater political role in their male-dominated societies, despite recent failures.

Former Deputy Toujan Faisal, who in 1993 became Jordan's first and only woman deputy, and Rawya Shawwa, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), told a lecture entitled "Women in Parliament in Jordan and Palestine - Experience across the River Jordan," that they never differentiated between supporting women's issues at the expense of citizens' overall rights.

"I did not run as a woman, but I ran to fight for the rights of the people to enjoy a decent life and full democracy," Ms. Faisal told the gathering.

Ms. Shawwa, one of five women elected to the PLC, said it was clear that she stood for the rights of all people when she decided to run in the Palestinian elections.

"I stated that I was running as a candidate for both men and women, because I believe that the society will only advance with the cooperation of men and women," Ms. Shawwa, an independent, said.

Referring to her own experience, Ms. Faisal said women should not be frustrated. "Instead, women who are qualified should learn from my victory and know that in the end they will win."

Seventeen women candidates, including Ms. Faisal, faced over 600 men in the 1997 parliamentary elections but failed to win a single seat.

Ms. Faisal said she believed that in the past two parliamentary elections, opponents and members of the government worked hard to prevent her from winning in the elections.

"Still, this did not deter me from pursuing my role as a champion of human rights," she added.



Toujan Faisal

for their children," Ms. Faisal concluded.

Ms. Faisal, an outspoken deputy in the previous Parliament known for her strong criticism of the government's performance, blamed her failure in the 1997 elections on vote rigging.

Jordan launched democratic reforms in 1989, giving Jordanians more public freedoms. However, the opposition claims that since Jordan signed the 1994 peace treaty with Israel, freedoms have been slowly eroding.

Unlike Ms. Faisal, Ms. Shawwa, who hails from a family of politicians,

stated that she received strong support from both her family and the Palestinian public in the conservative Gaza district in which she ran.

On Jan. 20, 1996, elections were held in Palestine for the first time, with 28 women running against 626 male candidates.

Five women won seats in the 88-strong Palestinian Legislative Council.

Ms. Shawwa said Palestinian women have played a greater role in Palestinian society because of the experience they gained in fighting years of Israeli occupation.

Shawwa, a mother of four, said she felt it was her duty to run because "my society wanted me to run and I felt maybe I could have raised the voices of a certain sector of Palestinian society."

Both women concluded by stating that women should have high hopes and should work to raise their voices and demand stronger political representation.

According to Angela Grünert, a German researcher and journalist who conducted a field study on the experience of Palestinian women in the PLC, the five female politicians in Palestine see a need for the human rights and equality of women to be emphasised.

Ms. Grünert, who reviewed her field study at the seminar, said the five women feel they should have the same possibilities as their male colleagues... to become "more" politically involved.

The chairperson of the seminar, Eidah Mutlaq, who is also the assistant dean of student affairs at Yarmouk University, added in a speech that several questions need to be answered to ensure that women are better represented in future parliaments.

"Women's experience in this field is still new, and there have been several attempts to abort it before it matures," Dr. Mutlaq, who failed to win a seat in the 1989 Jordanian parliamentary elections, told the gathering.

Last month, the government rejected demands by women's organisations to allocate a number of seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament, which is currently all male.

A draft election law expected to be endorsed by Parliament does not include a quota for women.

Dr. Mutlaq criticised the current legislation and the election law, which she said "is lacking and does not cope with democratic and social advancements."

Hussein Abu Rumman, executive director of Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Centre, added his voice to Dr. Mutlaq and criticised the draft election law, which he said "does not meet the minimum required amendments of the old law."

"If endorsed, this law will maintain the current obstacles that stand in the way of women reaching Parliament," he said.

The one-day seminar was organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Centre.

CORRECTION

IN THE news brief entitled "New Indian ambassador presents credentials" (Thursday-Friday April 16-17), the ambassador's name was erroneously reported. The name should have read Her Charan Singh Dhody. The Jordan Times regrets any inconveniences caused by this error.

Um Ramzi: Serving the community with UNRWA for over 30 years

NAWAL SA'ID Haddad is a staff nurse at UNRWA's health centre in Jabal Weibdeh in Amman. The centre was opened in 1966, shortly before Nawal, or Um Ramzi (as she prefers to be called), joined UNRWA, to cater for the refugee families living in areas outside camps in downtown Amman.

"We have two doctors and one dentist in addition to other staff," she says. "With this small group of people, we take care of about 250 patients a day."

Um Ramzi first decided to become a nurse when she was still at secondary school in Salt, 25 kilometres west of Amman. "Nurses visited the school to encourage the girls there to follow their example, but I didn't need much pushing. I always wanted to take care of children."

At the time, nurses in Jordan were in short supply. Women had barely entered the job market, and those who did work were usually teachers. It took a lot of courage to become a working woman, but in 1961 Um Ramzi joined the Nursing College in Jabal Al Ashrafyeh in Amman.

When she graduated from college two years later, she worked for the Ministry of Health as chief nurse of the Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital in Jabal Al Ashrafyeh. She married in 1967 and gave birth to her first son, Ramzi, the following year.

Um Ramzi found it difficult to work at the same time as looking after her child and the house. "I had to work until late in the afternoon. I would leave Ramzi with neighbours, but that cost money. There were no kindergartens or nurseries as there are now," she says, "so I started to look for another job that didn't require me to work such long hours."

Her opportunity came in 1968 when she heard UNRWA was recruiting nurses to work at its health centres. She began her long career with UNRWA at Souf camp, about 50 kilometres to the north of Amman and five kilometres from the Roman ruins of Jerash. The camp was one of six that had just been established to accommodate Palestinian refugees displaced from the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

"The physical conditions in the camp were very bad and the families were poor," Um Ramzi remembers. "The health centre and other UNRWA facilities were in tents. It was not a healthy environment, or a good one to be working in."

As part of UNRWA's health strategy to cater for the community as a whole, Um Ramzi made home visits to the families in the camp. "Most of the health problems were a result of poor hygiene, low awareness of health problems and a lack of financial resources," she says. "Malnutrition, anaemia and diarrhoeal diseases were very common, especially among pregnant women and children. Many of the children were underweight."

Although Um Ramzi was working shorter hours than in her previous job, it still took her two hours to cover the distance between Souf camp and Amman as the roads were very bad. She asked for a transfer to a health centre closer to her home, and in 1969 she began working at Amman New (Wihdat) camp in Amman, one of four camps set up in

Jordan after 1948.

"The conditions in Wihdat were better than in Souf, but the workload was heavier," she recalls. UNRWA's main health centre and the mother and child health centre in Wihdat serve the camp residents and the refugees living in the surrounding areas, a client list estimated in late 1997 at about 150,000 people.

In 1980, Um Ramzi attended a mid-wifery training course at the same college where she had been trained as a staff nurse, and afterwards worked in Jabal Hussein and Wihdat camps in Amman.

In 1988 she was transferred to Marka (a 1967 camp), where UNRWA had finished building a new health centre to replace the dilapidated pre-fabricated premises. Her Majesty Queen Noor

The greatest success of the health programme is a hidden one, a persistence against the odds — Um Ramzi

was invited to open the centre, and Um Ramzi was to prepare it for the inauguration.

She met Queen Noor again a year later, when a ceremony was held in Amman to honour nurses with 25 years of service. The Queen gave each nurse a shield, a watch and a certificate of appreciation. "That was one of my happiest moments," Um Ramzi says.

She remembers many children and adults she has served over the years. However, she has special memories of two people: a child in Wihdat camp and an old man in Jabal Hussein.

Two-year old Mohammad was cared for in the centre in Wihdat in the late 1970s. Mohammad's mother was illiterate and didn't know how to take care of her baby. The nurses noticed that the baby was getting worse everyday and reported the case to Um Ramzi. "I looked at Mohammad and was drawn to him immediately. He was a charming baby and I decided to take it as a challenge to look after him and help his mother learn how to take care of him."

It wasn't easy. Mohammad's mother didn't know how to prepare a nutritious meal for her child. "I brought samples of food from home to teach the woman how to cook vegetables and pulses, and to turn milk into yoghurt," Um Ramzi says. Gradually the baby improved and the mother brought him to the clinic every day.

"Ten years later, I met them in the market. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw Mohammad. He was by then 12 years old, and he had grown up to become a healthy boy, with a smile on his face and large eyes filled with happiness."

In Jabal Hussein camp Um Ramzi learned of an old widower who suffered from tuberculosis. On her first visit she saw he was living in miserable condi-

tions. "He didn't know how to take care of himself or keep his home clean. He was living by himself and no one visited him, though he had three sons who were living in the camp with their wives and children."

Before the old man caught the disease, the youngest son had lived with him but, after he learned his father had tuberculosis, he took his family and moved out. "He told me that his sons stopped visiting him for fear of catching the disease," Um Ramzi says. When she began caring for him, the man was desperate and showed no desire to live. She kept visiting, frequently, and looked after him until eventually his attitude changed and his morale improved.

"The health conditions of the Palestinian refugees have improved enormously since I began working with UNRWA," Um Ramzi says. As a result of the progress UNRWA has made in improving the health of the refugees, and since healthier people live longer, UNRWA's health programme has to face new challenges. "The challenges we face today are those of a community in transition. UNRWA has now to cope with an increasing number of lifestyle diseases which are more typical of industrialised countries, such as heart disease, hypertension and diabetes." In response, UNRWA has introduced a programme to prevent and control non-communicable diseases which includes specialised clinics for diabetes and hypertension in all 23 health centres and health points in Jordan.

"The greatest success of the health programme is a hidden one, a persistence against the odds," Um Ramzi says. UNRWA's health care has continued to improve despite expanding needs. The number of patients receiving treatment continues to grow, against a background of limited resources and an economic decline affecting the Palestinian refugee population in recent years.

Throughout three decades of work, Um Ramzi's family life has not been at all easy. In addition to Ramzi, she had two more sons she had to care for as well as the dozens of children she saw everyday at work. Since the death of her husband, she has lived with her youngest son Rajal, 23, who owns a beauty salon in partnership with a friend. Oldest son Ramzi studied engineering in the Ukraine. He married and is still living there. Ramzi, 25, studied decoration and interior design at a community college in Amman. He is now married and lives in the United States with his wife.

Um Ramzi has one son at home, one in the "east" and one in the "west." She is proud of them all and of their achievements. It wasn't easy to bring them up. The most difficult times came in 1995 when it was discovered that her husband, who worked as a chief clerk with the Amman municipality, had cancer of the stomach. After a difficult period of suffering and pain for all members of the family, Abu Ramzi passed away in 1996.

"Stomach cancer is very painful. Even though we see these things everyday, it is not easy to watch someone you love growing sicker with a disease like that. But I am a nurse," She manages a smile.

— UNRWA

Israeli attack on Cana still fuels Lebanese age

(Continued from page 1)

and ruled out negotiations with Israel, saying the United Nations demands an unconditional pull out.

Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, has done little to curb the activities of Hizbollah which is waging a guerrilla war to oust 1,000 Israeli troops and their 3,000 South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia clients from the occupation zone.

Damascus wants a comprehensive peace settlement in which Israel would pull out from both south Lebanon and Syria's Golan Heights captured in 1967, an option the Israelis are trying to

avoid.

Hizbollah, which has become a more effective fighting force, has refused to say if it would stop attacks on Israel in the event of a withdrawal.

Memories of Cana attack still fresh.

Even if a deal is struck, emotional scars still run deep in places like Cana, raising doubts over the prospects for long-term stability in south Lebanon which is plagued by roadside bombs, rocket attacks and air raids.

Seven members of Majdi Balhas's immediate family were killed when the shells rained down on Cana. He struggles to gesture with his

hand when he discusses the future because two of his fingers were blown off in the attack.

"I want to keep fighting the Israelis. They have already killed my family. An Israeli withdrawal means nothing," said Mr. Balhas, who keeps an Israeli mortar he found in a nearby field in his house to help maintain a strong desire for revenge.

The attack on Cana is seen by the Lebanese as one of the worst atrocities in decades of Israeli military incursions into their country.

It was the bloodiest incident in a 17-day Israeli bombardment that killed up to 200 people, mostly civilians,

A U.N. investigation concluded that 17 shells exploded in or around the base at Cana and that it was unlikely that the shelling was the result of an Israeli mistake.

"We were all sitting together in the camp when the Israeli shells came down on us like the rain," said Naila Borji who sits down beside her family's tombstones every day and recites verses from the Koran, the Muslim Holy Book.

They stare out from 18 fading photographs over a row of graves at the cemetery, which has become a national shrine.

"May God destroy Israel," Naila said.

Japanese, Russian leaders launch no-neckties summit

KAWANA, Japan (AFP) — Japanese and Russian leaders Saturday launched a "no-neckties" weekend summit in this heavily-guarded coastal resort, as thousands of police kept extreme rightist protesters at bay.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and President Boris Yeltsin emerged from 90-minute talks in the Kawana Hotel as a political storm brewed in Moscow, and Japanese rightists blamed protests on streets nearby.

A second round of talks is to be held Sunday before Mr. Yeltsin returns to Moscow after a 24-hour stay for the informal summit at this hilltop resort, 100 kilometres southwest of Tokyo.

Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi, who travelled with the Russian leader on a helicopter from Tokyo to the summit site, said Mr. Yeltsin appeared to be "extremely healthy" despite rumours to the contrary.

The Russian leader and Mr. Hashimoto popped in on a wedding being held at the same hotel. "I hope that relations between our two countries will go as well as your wedding ceremony," Mr. Yeltsin told the reception.

Outside, rightists cruised the streets in more than 100 vans, issuing demands from loudspeakers for the return of Russian-held southern Kuril Islands.

The disputed islands, which lie to the north of Japan, were seized by troops of the former Soviet Union in the dying days of World War II and have since blocked the signing of a peace treaty.

Mr. Hashimoto welcomed Mr. Yeltsin with a hug when the Russian leader arrived with his wife Naina by helicopter on the lawn below the magnificent hotel, built in the 1930s for golfing millionaires.

Mr. Yeltsin, 67, smiling and looking relaxed, took off his tie when he saw Mr. Hashimoto wearing a roll-neck sweater under his jacket. Dozens of school children dressed in uniform waved flags and cheered "Russia, Russia."

Police imposed a security perimeter on streets around the hotel and barred the protesters, who had registered their demonstrations in advance, from approaching within 100 metres of the cordon.

Three rightists from one van were arrested for exceeding noise limits, said a police spokesman in the

main city of Ito. Kawana lies on the outskirts of the city.

Mr. Yeltsin was accompanied by his daughter and advisor Tatiana Datchenko, the president's spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembski and Acting First Vice Premier Boris Nemtsov.

Japan hopes to make progress in its demands for the return of the southern Kuril Islands and a raft of economic deals is on the table to smooth relations.

Among them, Mr. Hashimoto was reportedly expected to offer support for electricity development on the power-short Kuril Islands, the first such Japanese assistance for major infrastructure on the territory.

But on the eve of the summit, Russian Prime Minister-designate Sergei Kiriyenko told the lower house of parliament, the Duma, that Moscow would not hand over the islands, which lie to the north of Japan.

The Duma voted for the second time against Mr. Kiriyenko's candidature as prime minister, hours before Mr. Yeltsin left for Japan. The legislators have one more chance to approve Mr. Yeltsin's choice before the Duma is dissolved.

"I appreciate his friendship for coming here at a time when Russia's domestic politics is in a crucial stage," Mr. Hashimoto said as he left Tokyo for Kawana.

"I will let myself be natural with him. Something that had not moved for 50 years has finally started moving."

Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Hashimoto held a landmark summit last November in Krasnoyarsk, eastern Siberia, calling for a peace treaty to be concluded by 2000 and for the islands dispute to be settled.

A total 105 vans were driving around Kawana and the main Ito city, police said, but the force of 4,300 officers, including anti-riot officers, was blocking access to the Kawana Hotel.

Traffic snarls built up on the narrow roads around the usually tranquil town. On a six-kilometre drive from Ito to the hilltop Kawana hotel, police at four checkpoints stopped cars and demanded identification papers. No cars were allowed into the driveway to the Kawana Hotel.

Police said 1,600 riot police were drafted in from other prefectures to bring the security force to a total 4,300 officers.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (right) applauds Naoya Goto, (second left) who is holding a wedding gift from Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto (left), during a wedding reception at Kawana Hotel, the venue of the two leaders' informal meeting. The two leaders made a surprise visit to the wedding ceremony of Goto and his newly-wed wife Kayori, which coincided with the day of Mr. Yeltsin's arrival (Reuters photo)

Yeltsin 'rapes' Duma with Kiriyenko nominations

MOSCOW (AFP) — Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev accused Russian leader Boris Yeltsin of practically "raping" the lower house state Duma by renominating as premier a young reformer twice rejected by deputies.

Interfax reported Saturday. Mr. Gorbachev, who quit as Soviet president in 1991 after losing a power struggle with Mr. Yeltsin, head of the Russian Federation which was then still part of the Soviet Union, said Mr. Yeltsin had become "a destabilising factor for Russia."

"By imposing the candidacy of Sergei Kiriyenko, the president almost rapes public opinion and the Duma," said Mr. Gorbachev, who shot to international prominence

in 1985 when he became Soviet leader.

Mr. Yeltsin nominated Mr. Kiriyenko, a 35-year-old technocrat deputy rejected as prime minister for a second time Friday, for a third and decisive confirmation ballot next Friday.

If lawmakers reject Mr. Kiriyenko a third time Mr. Yeltsin must dissolve the Duma and call fresh elections within three months.

Mr. Gorbachev blasted Mr. Yeltsin's tactics as confrontational, saying they signalled his intention "to carry on with the policy that led the country into the crisis of 1993 and the war in Chechnya, and which has been rejected by the majority of Russian citizens."

The Kremlin chief's tussle with parliament over the premiership is the

most serious crisis since Mr. Yeltsin sent in tanks to crush a parliamentary uprising in 1993.

Forcing deputies to accept Mr. Kiriyenko, who critics charge is too young and inexperienced to hold the second most important public office in a major nuclear power, would only increase tension in the country.

The baby-faced reformer would be a Yeltsin puppet who could be easily dispensed with, added Mr. Gorbachev.

Mr. Gorbachev, whose dovish policies to the West ended decades of cold war tension, currently runs an eponymous foundation in Moscow which has had several run-ins with the authorities over its siting.

S. Korea confident time on its side in North ties

BEIJING (R) — Neither Korea got what it wanted from the first high-level North-South discussions in four years, but it was South Korea's chief negotiator who was smiling and North Korea's who was somberly shaking his head as talks collapsed Saturday.

Despite the failure of marathon "fertiliser-for-family reunion" talks in Beijing, the South Koreans appeared confident that the needy northerners would come back to the table sooner rather than later.

"Considering the situation facing North Korea, we do not believe that it will refuse to continue North-South dialogue," Seoul's chief negotiator, Jeong Se-Hyon, said after announcing the breakdown.

"It will be difficult for North Korea to disregard south Korean offers of help."

In contrast, Jon Kum-Chol, Jeong's North Korean counterpart, launched a long-winded speech denouncing South Korea that was punctuated with angry gestures that spoke of his frustration.

"The new South Korean administration is using fertiliser as a means of political provocation," he said angrily. "They were trifling with their fellow Koreans."

The dejected-looking Jon blasted as "unreasonably

bars" South Korea's insistence that fertiliser aid to the hungry north required a firm North Korean commitment to allowing reunions of families divided since the 1950-53 Korean war.

"In many ways the new South Korean government is more confrontational and more conservative toward the North than its predecessor," Mr. Jon said, shaking his head.

Analysts said that South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung, who came to office in February vowing to make a breakthrough in North-South ties, has clearly been more conciliatory to the North than past governments.

The South's tough stance on fertiliser aid, Mr. Jeong said confidently throughout the talks, was supported by a public deeply suspicious of North Korea from past disappointments.

As the talks bogged down in Beijing, South Korean newspaper editorials voiced near unanimous dismay that North Korea had not shown any hint it would change its hard-line behaviour in exchange for aid.

Behind South Korea's conviction that all roads to North Korea's salvation run through Seoul is the growing isolation of Pyongyang, which appears to be alienating friends faster than it can win over old foes.

As Mr. Jeong spoke of North Korea's isolation, explaining that Japan and the United States would not upgrade their ties with Pyongyang without a North-South thaw, a Japanese newspaper reported yet another snub to the Stalinist state.

The Sankei Shimbun reported that Chinese President Jiang Zemin recently turned down a request from North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il who wanted to make a trip to China his first foreign visit since he took power.

China, whose president usually makes time for visiting heads of even the tiniest African states, has shipped fertiliser and food to North Korea but is known to be impatient with its quirky Communist ally's refusal to reform its economy.

Even the international aid community has shed its studious politeness and begun complaining about North Korea's we-dare-you-to-care attitude towards its beneficiaries.

World Food Programme Director Catherine Bertini this week voiced frustration in dealing with Pyongyang officialdom and warned that the WFP would cut back desperately needed grain aid unless the secretive state opened wider to monitoring of food distribution.

New rightwing movement set up in France

LYON, France (AFP) — French politician Charles Millon, expelled from the centre-right UDF party in a row over alliances with the far-right National Front, late Friday announced the setting up of a new national political grouping to be called simply "The Right."

Addressing up to 4,000 supporters here, Mr. Millon declared: "Solemnly, I announce to you tonight the creation of a national movement for political action which will finally dare to call itself 'The Right.'"

The traditional right and the left each have 61 members in the regional Rhone-Alpes assembly after elections last month, and Mr. Millon owed his reelection March 20 as head of the regional council to the votes of 35 National Front members.

Refusing to resign, he was ejected from the Union for French Democracy (UDF) on April 8. The background is a row in the UDF, junior partner to the neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic in the conservative national opposition, over whether to accept National Front support in regional assemblies.

The mainstream parties had hitherto boycotted the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen because of its racism, despite its consistent score of around 15 per cent of votes in successive elections.

Last week the UDF expelled three leading members for striking deals with the National Front in local elections in defiance of party orders. The three had refused to bow to a party order to resign the presidencies they won with National Front support.

The UDF executive ruled in favour of the expulsion of Mr. Millon, Charles Baur of the northern Picardy region, and Jacques Blanc, president of the southwestern Languedoc-Roussillon.

France's mainstream right is torn by moral doubts over whether or not to cooperate with the National Front with its open polemics against non-European immigrants and Jews.

Annan's decision on U.N. probe could slow aid to Congo

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — A decision by U.N. chief Kofi Annan to halt a U.N. human rights probe is likely to slow badly needed aid and investment to Democratic Republic of Congo.

U.N. officials said that donor countries and private investors would now think twice about helping Kinshasa after Mr. Annan Friday pulled out a team investigating massacres of Rwandan refugees because of systematic obstruction by DRC authorities.

But they also stressed that the United Nations was not cutting its links with Kinshasa despite Mr. Annan's decision to pull out the team, which he dispatched to DRC last August.

President Laurent Kabila, whose Rwandan-backed former rebel forces are widely blamed for the killings, has invited Annan to a May 15 regional summit on stability and economic development in the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Annan has declined the invitation. "How could he go under the circumstances," one senior official said. But he is sending U.N. Development Programme chief Gustave Speth to the meeting.

Kinshasa Saturday called on the international community to stop attaching conditions to reconstruction aid for the country, whose infrastructure was destroyed by decades of misrule by ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

"Our government has not received any external aid. Our so-called friends have done nothing for the government," Economic and Oil Minister Pierre-Victor Mpyo said in a statement.

"We no longer want someone to come and tell us that aid comes with strings attached. They have promised us aid. But this aid doesn't come just as we are planning the coun-

try's reconstruction," the minister added.

The European Union has offered the lion's share of humanitarian and reconstruction aid to DRC, totalling some \$400 million. However, the aid is contingent on Kinshasa meeting human rights and other criteria.

The World Bank has also set up a trust fund, totalling some \$30 million.

Mr. Mpyo's remarks came a day after Kinshasa dissolved and banned the main human rights group in the former Zaire and gave others three days to register. It also follows a meeting between Kabila and the U.S. president in Entebbe, Uganda last month during which Bill Clinton insisted on the need for multi-party politics and greater respect for human rights and opposition parties in the DRC.

A U.N. official noted that in future, governments would be "much more reticent" about releasing funds to Kinshasa because of Mr. Kabila's human rights record.

The official added that private investors, particularly in the mining sector, would also conclude that "there is no political and social stability in DRC in the long term."

The Congolese government must understand the need for guarantees and "transparent" government, to ensure the protection of investment in the country, the official said.

Congolese Ambassador to the United Nations Andre Kapanga said Friday: "The doors are still open, those countries that want to help us are more than welcome, those companies that want to invest in the Congo are more than welcome."

"But at the same time, we cannot wait forever, we have essentially to rely on our own resources."

Indonesia, Brunei to cooperate in battling Kalimantan fires

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN (AFP) — Brunei and Indonesia are to cooperate in battling vast forest fires in the Indonesian region of Kalimantan, a senior official said here Saturday as a choking smoke haze spread over the region.

Urging countries such as the United States to help, the head of Brunei's efforts to battle the environmental problem said "both sides have agreed to work together in firefighting efforts."

Haji Zakaria bin Haji Saruddin, secretary of Brunei's National Haze Committee and head of the development ministry's environment unit, told AFP a cooperation deal on firefighting was reached last week with Jakarta.

"It's just a matter of formalities, such as who will be involved in the mission, when we shall proceed," Haji Zakaria said.

They expected a response from Indonesia over the weekend as to the exact date a mission from Brunei could be sent to Kalimantan to assess the situation, he said.

U.N. experts say some 10,000 firefighters are needed to douse the fires, blamed on land-clearing and a severe drought.

Brunei's government urged bigger nations such as the United States to take a direct hand in firefighting efforts. "ASEAN is stressing the superpowers have to play a part. The U.S. is pledging millions of dollars for research-oriented assistance ... It would be better if they come forward to assist in firefighting directly," Haji Zakaria said.

The United States has promised \$2 million to help Indonesia fight the fires that have razed some 280,000 hectares of forest in East Kalimantan province. Satellite

Kohl denounces rival Schroeder's lack of agenda

BONN (AFP) — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl slammed his left-wing election rival Gerhard Schroeder for having no political agenda and being interested only in seizing power, reported Germany's Welt am Sonntag weekly.

Mr. Schroeder, who was officially confirmed Friday as the Social Democrats' candidate for chancellor, "has no political programme and is only intent on gaining power," said Mr. Kohl in an interview with the paper to appear today.

On the SPD ceremony of investiture at Leipzig, the chancellor quipped that Mr. Schroeder, tipped by many to unseat Mr. Kohl, would probably "win a prize for putting on the best show."

Mr. Kohl, in power for a record 16 years, is confident of staying put, claiming that the business community and economists are hoping for victory for the governing centre-right coalition (CDU/CSU).

The 68-year-old chancellor warned that an SPD-Alliance90/Greens party coalition would seek to back-track on economic reforms launched by his centre-right.

A ruling SPD-Alliance90/Greens coalition would be "bad for economic recovery and would signal the end of all hope of job creation," warned Mr. Kohl.

"The SPD is not 'a new centre' but merely 'the old left-wing,'" he went on, underlining traces of SPD leader Oskar Lafontaine's influence in Mr. Schroeder's agenda.

Mr. Lafontaine, who is reputed to be more left-wing than Mr. Schroeder, seeks to impose "the old state, SPD model" on Germany, said Mr. Kohl.

Czech leader back in operating theatre after breathing problems

INNSBRUCK, Austria (AFP) — Czech President Vaclav Havel was back in the operating theatre Saturday for a "clean-up" of his right bronchi after suffering breathing problems, his doctors said.

In Prague, the presidency said the one-hour treatment was a success and was over at 11:00 a.m. (0900 GMT).

The evacuation of the fluids from the bronchial tubes was carried out by a hospital medical team and his personal doctors at the Innsbruck clinic where he underwent emergency bowel surgery Tuesday for a perforated intestine.

The bronchoscopy became necessary because fluids are obstructing the president's bronchi and are causing breathing prob-

lems, the Czech news agency CTK said earlier citing a spokesman for the president.

Doctors said they "cleaned up his bronchi" after fluids reduced the air flow to part of his right lung.

Mr. Havel had been put on a respirator overnight Thursday because of his breathing problems.

He had been ordered to rest more and cut down his workload Friday after he developed a slight fever.

The 61-year-old president was rushed to hospital Tuesday from his holiday home in the Austrian Tyrol. Mr. Havel, once a heavy smoker, has been hospitalised on several occasions since an operation to take out a cancerous

tumour from his right lung in December 1996.

More recently surgeons removed a lump in his throat in November.

Mr. Havel was placed in the hospital's intensive care unit after his latest health scare.

One of Mr. Havel's doctors, anaesthetist Bohumil Limberk, was called in to assist the medical team which is looking after the president.

Czech Deputy Health Minister Miroslav Cerkob told Czech radio the breathing problems did not take doctors by surprise after Tuesday's bowel surgery. Wounds from that operation were healing normally, the doctor added.

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India's new coalition falling apart

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's fledgling minority coalition is already falling apart as it struggles to keep a major ally in its camp, opposition leaders said Friday.

The Hindu nationalist-led coalition, in power for less than a month, is trying to placate the maverick leader of the AIADMK party after she tabled a series of demands that could threaten the fragile alliance.

AIADMK head Jayalalitha Jayaram said all government ministers facing criminal charges should stand down until proved innocent after a member of her own party had to resign as transport minister last week over corruption allegations.

The Congress, the main opposition party, said Mr. Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party would pay a high price to keep Ms. Jayalalitha, who controls 18 of the coalition's 264 seats.

"No government can work unless it has a homogenous team with one purpose," Congress spokesman Ved Prakash told AFP. "This government cannot run smoothly as each constituent has its own agenda."

Mr. Prakash said Ms. Jayalalitha, a former film actress worshipped by admirers in her southern home state of Tamil Nadu, was "working as a remote control."

"This will have an effect on other regional constituents and the casualty will be development. The people will get fed up and the government will have to go."

India has had five governments and two inconclusive national elections within the last two years.

The Times of India, in an editorial, said Mr. Jayalalitha and the government were playing "political poker... in full public view."

The newspaper said her demand over corruption-tainted ministers was "in principle... a compelling argument" but such a policy would deprive the coalition of a string of ministers and top officials, including Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani.

Mr. Advani is a senior leader in the BJP and was

party chief until this week when he was replaced by a right-wing leader. He is facing charges over the 1992 razing of the Babri mosque by Hindu fanatics which claimed 2,000 lives in religious violence.

Friday a prominent ally of Ms. Jayalalitha asked Premier Vajpayee to sack Mr. Advani.

Suhramaniam Swamy, a Tamil politician and leader of the Janata (People's) Party, said: "Advani has been accused of a conspiracy to demolish the Babri mosque, which is a crime against humanity and a national shame."

The AIADMK, based in Tamil Nadu and currently in opposition there, also wants the state assembly to be dismissed by New Delhi and new regional elections held.

However, a special government panel set up to look into allegations of misrule in Tamil Nadu late Thursday said it was satisfied with the law and order situation there.

Keshubh Thakre, the new BJP president, meanwhile, played down criticism that the government was being held to ransom by coalition partners, most of which are regional parties without a national agenda.

Describing their demands as "speedbreakers" encountered on a journey, he said: "They are not insurmountable. Everyone knows speedbreakers don't break the car. So why be afraid... if you know how to drive?"

D. Raja, however, a leader of the opposition Communist Party of India, said the BJP's election promise of "stability" rang hollow.

"The irony of the situation is that Jayalalitha, who herself is facing corruption charges, can have the audacity to dictate terms to the government... and worse, the government seems to be responding."

"The BJP in its lust for power will do anything to stay on. But what is the cost to the country? I am sure the government will not last a full term."

Analysts warned after February-March elections that Mr. Vajpayee's coalition was unlikely to last much more than a year-and-a-half because of the conflicting ambitions of its constituents.



Indonesian riot troops beat students from the Bandung Institute of Technology in Bandung, capital of West Java. Thousands of students from the school clashed with the police when they were blocked from taking to the streets (Reuters photo)

Suharto allows security forces to crack down in emergency

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesian President Suharto said the country's security forces could take "repressive measures" to restore order, press reports said Friday.

Mr. Suharto's statement, read out at the commemoration of the 46th anniversary of the army's special Kopassus force here, came as student protests which have been staged since February across the country to demand reforms, began to spill onto the streets.

"Security forces can apply repressive measures only in crisis and emergency situations," said the Mr. Suharto speech read out by Kopassus chief Major General Muchdi Purwopranjono according to the Jakarta Post daily.

But despite the speech thousands more staged a rally Friday in western Indonesia to demand that the Indonesian Armed

Forces (ABRI) stay out of political affairs.

"We want ABRI to protect the nation's security and stay out of the political realm," a student at the state Teacher's Institute, Gun Sugianto, said during the 3000-strong rally in Padang, the capital of West Sumatra province.

The students also called on Mr. Suharto to step down after 32 years in office, during which time he has maintained a tight grip on the country's political process.

However, Mr. Suharto said repressive measures should only be taken as a last resort to prevent a situation from deteriorating out of control. The measures should be kept to a minimum and immediately followed by a restoration of order. Mr. Suharto said officials should always respect the law in their actions.

Kopassus in maintaining law and order had not been needed as the police and the population could cope, he said.

"The government hopes that the people, local officials and police can maintain national security and order without Kopassus troops' involvement," Mr. Suharto said.

Waves of student demonstrations on campuses across the nation started in late February to call for urgent political and economic reforms, including a fresh national leadership, to help the country battle its economic crisis.

Mr. Suharto was returned to a seventh five-year term of office by a national legislative assembly in March, despite growing calls for him to step down. Despite warnings by the authorities that tough action would be taken against student protests if they spilled out

of their universities, some have increasingly attempted to take to the streets.

In a scuffle Thursday between student protesters and security forces attempting to block their march, 30 students and five policemen were injured in Java, the Kompas daily said.

Nine students were injured when 2,000 students from several universities in Bandung, West Java, gathered at the Bandung Institute of Technology and attempted to take to the streets, while 21 students and five policemen were hurt when police rallied at the state-owned Sudirman University attempted to force their way past a security cordon at the front gate.

Indonesia is currently dealing with its worst economic crisis in the past three decades, following the rapid slide of the rupiah that began in July.

Rugova calls on Belgrade to negotiate on neutral ground

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova called on Belgrade Friday to open negotiations "on neutral ground" and in the presence of a third party to determine the status of the southern Serbian province.

"I confirm our willingness for dialogue, and I call on Belgrade officials to meet with Albanian negotiators on neutral ground and with a third party present," Mr. Rugova told reporters in the Kosovo capital Pristina.

The appeal marked the first time that the Albanian leader publicly agreed to talks with Belgrade authorities.

Kosovo Albanians make up 90 per cent of the population of the south Serbian province, whose autonomy was revoked by then Yugoslav Communist party leader Slobodan Milosevic in 1989. They demand indepen-

dence of the province, or at least a status of a republic, like Serbia and Montenegro, which now make up rump Yugoslavia, with an international civilisation protectorate. as the first step towards independence, as Mr. Rugova confirmed Friday.

Serbian officials invited Kosovo Albanian representatives to hold talks more than a month ago, but their offer has been turned down 11 times since March 12.

Kosovo Albanians agreed to talks with Yugoslav officials under international mediation, a condition rejected by Belgrade despite strong international pressure and a threat of new sanctions.

Mr. Rugova described the situation in the province as "serious and extremely tense," following numerous armed incidents in Kosovo.

U.S. wants dialogue between Pakistan and India

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — The United States is pressing for "comprehensive" talks between Pakistan and India on resolving bilateral problems, including Kashmir, U.S. Presidential Envoy Bill Richardson said Friday.

Mr. Richardson made the remarks during a breakfast meeting with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, their second in two days, before the U.S. envoy's departure for Afghanistan on a peace mission, an official Pakistani statement said.

The U.S. is "advocating on both India and Pakistan to engage in a comprehensive dialogue to resolve all their problems, including the problem of Jammu and Kashmir," the statement quoted Mr. Richardson as saying.

The dispute over Kashmir, the Himalayan region divided between Pakistan and India and claimed by both, has been a catalyst for two of the three wars between the neighbours in the past.

During the meeting Mr. Sharif explained the "immediacy and magnitude of the threat posed to Pakistan by India's massive nuclear and ballistic missile arsenal," the statement said.

Mr. Sharif said Pakistan had no other option but to take "appropriate" measures for its security, an apparent reference to the recent testing of a 1,500-kilometre range Ghauri missile, capable of hitting most major Indian cities.

Mr. Richardson told him the United States "understood and appreciated the steps Pakistan had to take to take to ensure its defence," the statement said.

He informed Mr. Sharif that the Clinton administration considered Pakistan a strategic ally and wanted to build an "all-embracing relationship that would promote regional peace and economic development in Pakistan."

The two agreed to take steps towards making the visit of President Bill Clinton here in the autumn a "resounding success, especially by ensuring economic cooperation as the centrepiece of bilateral ties," the statement said.

Mr. Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, arrived here Wednesday after visits to Bangladesh and India as part of his mission aimed at preparing the ground for Mr. Clinton's trip to the region.

Kiriyenko opposes transferring Kurils to Japan

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia will not hand over the disputed Kuril islands to Japan, Prime Minister-designate Sergei Kiriyenko insisted Friday, just hours before President Boris Yeltsin's departure for an informal summit in Japan.

"I am against surrendering Russia's positions on any issues," ITAR-TASS quoted Mr. Kiriyenko as saying in the lower house of parliament, the state Duma.

Answering deputies' questions ahead of a crucial confirmation vote, Mr. Kiriyenko noted that both Russia and Japan had acknowledged the existence of their territorial dispute, "but this does not mean we are preparing to hand over something."

"Nobody is going to give anything away," he added.

Japan wants the return of the southernmost islands in the Kuril chain off northern Japan, which were occupied by Soviet troops at the end of World War II. The dispute has blocked the signing of a peace treaty between the two countries.

Mr. Kiriyenko said he supported jointly developing the Kurils economy with Japan, but stressed that the dispute should be resolved "without haste, within the framework of Russian and international legal norms."

Mr. Yeltsin and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto will begin an informal summit Saturday at the resort town of Kawana, 100 kilometres southwest of Tokyo.

Japanese officials said the territorial row would be one of the main issues on the summit agenda.

Yeltsin renominates Kiriyenko for decisive third-round vote

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin Friday officially renominated Sergei Kiriyenko to the post of prime minister after his young protégé overwhelmingly lost a second-round vote on his candidacy, ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

Mr. Yeltsin's representative to the state Duma lower house Alexander Kotenkov said the head of state's letter reappointing Mr. Kiriyenko had left the Kremlin and was on its way to parliament.

The renomination sets up a showdown between president and parliament next week in a third-round vote. If the Duma rejects the president's candidate a third time it will be dissolved under the Russian constitution.

Mr. Kiriyenko Friday garnered just 115 votes in favour of his candidacy to 271 votes against with 11 abstentions in a second-round vote in the state Duma.

He needed 226 votes in the 450-seat chamber to secure confirmation.

Kashmir gunbattle continues, toll rises to 13

AHGAM, India (AFP) — The death toll from a bloody encounter between Indian troops and Muslim separatist rebels in northern Kashmir rose to 13 Friday as the conflict wore on for a third day, police said.

Police said one Indian soldier and a Muslim guerrilla died Friday in the gun battle at Ahgam, a village some 40 kilometres south of the state summer capital Srinagar.

Eight militants and three soldiers died during fighting in the last two days.

Residents said a dozen homes had been burnt down since Indian troops cordoned off the village and surrounded the militants.

"It is the first encounter of this type in the last eight years of militancy in Kashmir," said General R.K. Kaushal.

The "quality and quantity"

of the militants' weapons was a "matter of surprise," he added.

More than 20,000 people have died in Muslim-majority Kashmir since 1989 in violence linked to a separatist campaign.

The Himalayan state is disputed between India and Pakistan who have fought two wars over it.

Police said the militants were suspected to be Afghan nationalists associated with a hardline rebel organisation, the Hizbul Mujahideen.

They said the gunbattle had spilled over to an adjoining village Friday.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting militancy in Kashmir. Islamabad denies the charge but says it provides moral and diplomatic support to what it terms a legitimate expression for self-rule.

Dissident put under house arrest in southern China

BEIJING (AFP) — Police in southern China's Shenzhen have placed dissident Miao Xike under house arrest after repeated detentions since he staged a protest in Beijing's Tiananmen Square last month, a Hong Kong-based dissident group said Friday.

Mr. Xike has been detained four times since March 6, when he tried to set up a sign and shout slogans urging greater respect for human rights outside the annual meeting of China's parliament, the Information Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said.

Beijing police took him away in a truck, and he was initially released on March 24.

Last Tuesday, Mr. Miao

was detained again after agreeing in a telephone conversation with a journalist from television station France 2 to meet for an interview, the centre said in a statement received here, adding that he was held "late into the night."

The journalist, Caroline Nath, told AFP that a man who matched the dissident's description appeared at the agreed meeting place in a hotel lobby but refused to speak with her and fled.

She said police flooded into the hotel soon after, leading her to suspect that Mr. Miao knew the meeting was under surveillance.

The dissident runs a private karaoke business in Shenzhen, which is nestled against the border with Hong Kong.

Swede nabbed in Spain said to head drug smuggling ring

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — One of Sweden's most notorious criminals, Clark Olofsson, has been arrested in the Spanish resort of Tenerife on suspicion of heading one of Scandinavia's largest drug smuggling rings, press reports said Friday.

Mr. Olofsson, 51, who acquired Belgian citizenship and changed his name to Daniel Demyunck in 1991, was arrested Wednesday when he arrived in Tenerife to visit his eldest daughter, Swedish and Danish newspapers reported.

He had been wanted on an

international arrest warrant issued by Danish police six months ago.

According to press reports quoting Danish police, some 20 people are already jailed in Denmark on charges of being part of the drug ring. A number of others are jailed in Germany and Sweden.

The drug ring is said to have links with the motorcycle gangs Hell's Angels and Bandidos.

Mr. Olofsson is suspected of masterminding the smuggling of 60 kilograms of amphetamines and 150 kilograms of

hash recently seized in Denmark. The amphetamines alone are believed to have a street value of 25 million kroner (\$3.24 million).

"We believe that he (Clark Olofsson) is the main man behind the transport and smuggling of the 60 kilos of amphetamines that we have so far seized," Danish criminal investigator Frank Schoedt told the Danish paper Berlingske Tidende.

"We are pretty sure that we have plenty of material to get him extradited and convicted," Mr. Schoedt added.

More drug seizures linked to the ring are expected, police said.

Mr. Olofsson's lawyer, Peter Althin, denied in an interview with the Swedish daily Aftonbladet that his client was involved in any criminal wrongdoing.

Drug smuggling into Mr. Scandinavia has increased in recent years, primarily from Holland and Eastern Europe. In the first two months of 1998, Swedish police and customs officials recorded 352 drug busts, compared to 217 in the corresponding period last year.

Scuffles as farmer appears in court over baby shooting

BENONI, South Africa (AFP) — About 100 people scuffled with police outside a South African court Friday as a white farmer pleaded not guilty to murdering a six-month-old black baby in a case loaded with racial overtones.

Nicholas Steyn, 43, was remanded in custody until May 22, after withdrawing an application for bail.

Among those who attended the hearing was Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, head of the Women's League of the African National Congress and former wife of South African President Nelson Mandela.

"I still have to hear of a case where a white farmer has killed a white intruder," Madikizela-Mandela told reporters outside the court as the angry crowd chanted. She called for an investigation into the police handling of the case.

Mr. Steyn had told police he believed he was shooting at intruders.

President Mandela Tuesday visited the bereaved family to express his shock and outrage at the case, in which six-month-old Angelina Zwane was shot dead last Saturday.

He led criticism of the police who said they had not arrested Mr. Steyn until three days after the shooting because he had a fixed address and had cooperated.

The baby's mother is employed by Mr. Steyn's father.

The police said Mr. Steyn told them he had opened fire on a group of "trespassers" moving through his fields. Baby Angelina was hit in the head, and the gunfire seriously wounded her 11-year-old cousin who was carrying her on her back.

The killing has sparked nationwide outrage, particularly among blacks. It follows a similar incident in February when a white farmer shot dead a 12-year-old black boy who had pushed the farmer's grandson off a fence during a game.

He pleaded not guilty Wednesday to murdering the boy, the son of one of his farm labourers.

Increasingly nervous white landowners have been the target of hundreds of armed attacks in recent years, and farm groups have blamed Mr. Mandela for his failure to curb rural crime.

Schroeder formally named opposition candidate against Helmut Kohl

LEIPZIG, Germany (AFP) — Germany's opposition Social Democrats (SPD) Friday formally named Gerhard Schröder as their candidate to unseat Chancellor Helmut Kohl in September general elections.

The vote came after Mr. Schröder gave a keynote address to the SPD party congress here, in which he attacked Mr. Kohl's record in office and laid out proposals for fighting unemployment by slashing commercial taxes.

Mr. Schröder received the backing of 93 per cent of the congress delegates.

In his speech, Mr. Schröder said an SPD government would aim to bring corporate taxes "in line with international rates".

Therefore, "a tax rate of 35 per cent for all companies is our goal," he said, in what would be a 10 per cent reduction from the current rate of 45 per cent.

High tax rates are considered one of the key factors contributing to the current stagnation in the German economy.

"By his own standards is Helmut Kohl the chancellor of unemployment," Mr. Schröder said, taking dead aim at the record levels of joblessness of almost 12 per cent and five million out of work.

While recognising Mr. Kohl's place in the history books for overseeing the reunification of Germany, Mr. Schröder said the state was now suffering from "stagnation and paralysing

pessimism."

Mr. Kohl, 68, has been chancellor since 1982.

Mr. Schröder, 54, who is governor of the northern state of Lower Saxony is a market-oriented, media-friendly centrist who seeks to unite the SPD behind the sort of mainstream politics that have worked for Bill Clinton in the United States and Tony Blair in Britain.

The SPD congress in the eastern city of Leipzig opened with a sound and light show for the 480 delegates — plus an executive committee of 45.

Mr. Schröder stressed in his speech that "realism and purposeful activity are for us as important as ideology."

He also noted that the current centre-right govern-

ment's labour market reforms, including the abolition of job protection at companies with under 10 employees, the cut in sick pay and the extension of shop hours, had not boosted employment.

"We therefore want to correct the nonsense that this government has implemented," he said, adding that more details would be worked out once the SPD government revives the "Alliance for Work."

The "Alliance for Work" was launched by Mr. Kohl in January 1996. It sought to halve unemployment by the year 2000 but unemployment has soared since then.

Mr. Schröder also proposed a drop in income tax rates. "Our tax reform

would give a family with two children relief of 200 marks (about \$110) more a month."

The congress marked the return of the last SPD Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who has stayed away from party gatherings since the Social Democrats rejected in 1982 his centrist brand of leftism as they lost the chancellorship to Mr. Kohl.

Mr. Schröder said he wanted to revive Germany as an economic model, as it had been under Mr. Schmidt.

Mr. Kohl is trailing in the polls but he was in almost the exact same position in 1994, six months before winning the election that year. The difference this time, however, is the record post-war unemployment.



Gerhard Schröder, Social Democratic (SPD) challenger of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (left) and SPD chairman Oskar Lafontaine hug each other at the SPD party congress in Leipzig (Reuters photo)

Korean talks resume after midnight breakthrough

BEIJING (AFP) — North and South Korean officials strained towards a final agreement here Friday after a midnight breakthrough on helping reunite separated families and supplying fertiliser to the North.

The talks resumed early Friday but adjourned until further notice as both sides apparently failed to thrash out the details.

"There was little (progress) this time," a grim-looking North's chief delegate Jon Kum-Chol told journalists after he emerged from a 90-minute meeting with South Korean counterpart Jeong Se-Hyun in Mr. Jeong's hotel room.

"We'll keep in contact with each other and meet later," Mr. Jon said.

South Korean officials said the two rivals had agreed in principle to hold Red Cross talks this month to discuss details for helping reunite families split by the division of Korea in 1945.

The breakthrough came at a dinner meeting between the two sides late Thursday that lasted beyond midnight. South Korean chief delegate Jeong Se-Hyun told reporters.

He added the South wanted to fix the date for establishing a meeting place to help facilitate reunions of separated families at the ongoing high-level talks in Beijing.

But the North preferred to leave all details, including the timing for setting up the meeting place, to inter-Korean Red Cross talks. The venue and timing for the Red Cross talks have yet to be decided upon.

The North also wanted the South to ship 200,000 tonnes of fertiliser by the end of May to help grow more food to feed the starving in the famine-stricken Stalinist country, sources closed to the talks said.

The first inter-Korean government talks in nearly four years had come to a standstill over the South's demand that the North make a clear pledge to help contact and reunite separated families in return for fertiliser aid from the South.

For the first time since the Korean war of 1950-53, the two sides exchanged hometown visits by some 50 people from each side in 1985 after protracted but fruitful inter-Korean Red Cross talks.

But a long-time observer of North Korea said it would pose the North daunting problems to find separated families, feed them and spruce them up before allowing them to meet their relatives again.

It took six months for the North to locate the 50 people who had relatives in the South in 1985.

"They have been discriminated against in the North as traitors or a hostile class because their relatives went to the South to settle there before or during the Korean war," the observer said.

Korea was divided into the capitalist South and Communist North along the 38th parallel after the former Soviet Union occupied the North and the United States the South at the end of World War II to disarm Japanese troops.

Korea was under Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945.

U.S. envoy secures Taliban ceasefire, talks agreement

KABUL (AFP) — The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations announced Friday he has secured a ceasefire from the Afghan Taliban militia and won their agreement to hold landmark talks with opposition forces by April 27.

Following a meeting of more than two hours with Taliban number-two Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, Bill Richardson hailed the negotiations as a breakthrough for peace efforts to end Afghanistan's 18 year-old war.

"It appears we have a breakthrough that if the northern alliance agrees we will have talks between the Taliban and the northern alliance in Islamabad before April 27," Mr. Richardson told reporters.

"Until then we have the Taliban's commitment that there will be no fresh Taliban offensive," he added before departing by plane for a meeting with anti-Taliban leaders in northern Afghanistan.

Mr. Richardson, who is the most senior Western official to visit Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion of 1979, said his "tough talks" with the puritanical Muslim militia has given the U.N. process a major boost.

"It depends on deeds and not just words, but we made progress here today and most importantly we have a

process started that could lead to talks under U.N. auspices," Mr. Richardson said.

He said the Taliban had also agreed to release a "significant number" of opposition prisoners in the next two days in a gesture to back the agreement.

The ambassador said his aim in northern Afghanistan would be to secure the agreement of the anti-Taliban alliance leadership for a ceasefire and talks.

Speaking at the currently unused U.S. embassy in Kabul, Mr. Richardson also said he had secured progress over women's rights under the Taliban, drug production and improved working conditions for U.N. staff.

"We also made progress on women's rights and access to education, on drug cultivation and other key issues," he said without elaborating.

In the opposition-held northern town of Shiberghan, Mr. Richardson is scheduled to meet ethnic-Uzbek and ex-Communist warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam, ex-President Burhanuddin Rabbani and a Shiite faction leader Karim Khalili.

U.S. officials here said it was unclear whether opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masoud — who is battling the Taliban only 25 kilometres north of Kabul — would attend the afternoon meeting.

Rwandan government says army killed seventy rebels

KIGALI (AFP) — Rwandan army troops fighting alongside civilians killed 70 Hutu rebels in a raid in the central Gitarama region, the government said Friday.

The fighting occurred Wednesday in the Bulunga area, the Rwandan Information Office said, adding that the army operated "jointly with the population," who guided the soldiers.

The report was corroborated by a correspondent of the independent "news agency ARI in Gitarama."

The raid lasted all day Wednesday and continued Thursday, a witness said, adding: "There were no prisoners. I saw at least 30 bodies on the ground. The official tally is 70 rebels dead."

The Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) seized many weapons in the raid, including AK-47s and grenade launchers.

More than 100 people were killed last week in attacks blamed on Hutu rebels — former soldiers of the defeated Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Interahamwe militiamen — fighting the Tutsi-dominated government.

The clashes coincide with the fourth anniversary of the genocide in 1994, when Hutu extremists killed between half a mil-

lion and 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus before the military takeover of the RPA.

The insurgency, which escalated last year, has been largely restricted to the northern provinces of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, but a rebel presence in Gitarama has been known since late February.

Vice President and Defence Minister Paul Kagame said Thursday: "We still have remnants of the forces that carried out the genocide, who want to continue with the same. They cause more instability in the country, so we are fighting that, we are bringing that under control."

The Rwandan strongman said the rebels were "taking the cover of civilians" and tended to stay on the move "because of the reaction of both the military forces and the civilian population."

He said the Rwandan authorities had information that some 16,000 former FAR soldiers were in the Central African Republic and Congo "who are getting support... quietly from some European countries, and we are monitoring their activities and intentions."

Ex-FAR fighters also have rear bases in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

U.S. donates \$2 million to fight fires in Indonesia

JAKARTA (AFP) — The United States has donated \$2 million to help Indonesia fight forest fires and prevent further damage to the environment, a senior U.S. official said Friday.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Stanley Roth said the money would be "solely for Indonesia" to fight the fires that have already caused an estimated \$600 million in damages this year.

"Discussions are under way on the specific programmes that will be involved with this money," Mr. Roth told a press briefing during his brief visit that included meetings with Environment Minister Juwono Sudarsono and other senior Indonesian officials.

"We expect some decisions fairly shortly," he added.

He said the funding was apart from a \$4 million "Southeast Asia Environmental Initiative" just approved by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and involving other countries in the region.

The initiative would include fire-fighting capabilities, means of improving them, the provision of meteorological data and studies on the health impacts of the fires razing

vast tracts of land on Borneo Island.

"There is additional work which needs to be done to preventing the fires in the first place," he added.

Efforts to extinguish the blazes, blamed largely on large companies and farmers using slash-and-burn methods to clear land for planting, have generally been unsuccessful in the drought-stricken province where little rain has fallen since last July.

Hundreds of thousands of hectares of land in the province on the Indonesian section of Borneo Island have been razed since the beginning of this year.

Parts of the island have again been shrouded in a haze from fires on the Indonesian side as well as in the Malaysian state of Sarawak and in Brunei, after smoke last year forced airports to shut and raised the pollution index to unhealthy levels.

The latest data collected by the East Kalimantan province's Environmental Impact Control Agency, including from satellite imagery, showed that close to 285,000 hectares had been devastated by fires in the province as of April 16, the head of the agency, Awang Faruk Ishak, said.

Mr. Ishak was quoted by the Kompas daily as saying the fires had caused losses estimated to reach at

least 5.2 billion rupiah (\$641,975), including the damage to the environment, health and ecological changes.

The fires have burned more than a third of the 198,000 hectare Kutai National Park, the province's largest natural forest park, as well as large tracts of forest in the Bukit Subarto and Sungai Wein national parks, he said.

The fires had also razed 107,448 hectares of forest concessions, and 75,677 hectares of timber estates, Mr. Ishak said.

With the exception of brief rains in December, East Kalimantan has hardly seen any meaningful downpours since the middle of last year.

Officials have also blamed the abundance of coal, lignite and peat seams criss-crossing the province for the fires, as they can smoulder for a long time underground or just under the surface and re-ignite if fanned by wind.

Officials have said all the authorities could do now to fight the fires was to rely on manual efforts because of the inexistence of adequate technology and supporting equipment.

The drought has also dried up water sources necessary for firefighting efforts.

Portuguese premier vows smooth handover for Macau

MACAU (AFP) — Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres arrived in Macau Friday for a three-day visit and pledged his government will do all it can to ensure a smooth handover to Chinese rule, Xinhua reported.

"I pledge again that Portugal will take a responsible attitude to make sure that a smooth transition will be achieved in Macau," the official Chinese news agency quoted him as saying.

Mr. Guterres said he had full confidence that the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration signed by China and Portugal in 1987 will be implemented.

Xinhua said.

"I believe that Macau will continue to be a place of stability, harmony, prosperity and freedom," he said. "Macau is already an open and multiple society, and enjoys wide autonomy in its administration and legislature. Such a structure will be kept under the Special Administrative Region after 1999," he said.

The tiny Portuguese-administered enclave is



Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres (second left) accompanied by Macau Governor Rocha Viera (third left) arrives at Macau airport. Macau has stepped up security measures on Guterres's visit due to recent killings in the city linking to "triad" criminal gangs and the lucrative gambling industry (Reuters photo)

due to be handed back to China in December next year.

The prime minister was welcomed at the airport by Governor General Vasco Rocha Vieira and Legislative

President Anabela Ritchie. The prime minister is accompanied by Foreign Minister Jaime Gama, Economic Affairs Minister Pina Moura, Science and Technology Minister Mariano Gago and three

other cabinet ministers. The premier is due to meet Macao government officials, the bishop of Macau, local community leaders and Chinese officials before travelling to mainland China Sunday.

Sri Lanka matriarch marks 82nd birthday with Buddhist service

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's matriarch Sirima Bandaranaike, a symbol of dynastic rule in South Asia, marked her 82nd birthday Friday with a string of Buddhist services.

Saffron-robed Buddhist monks chanted and prayed for Sirima Bandaranaike, prime minister for a third time in Sri Lanka, at her Rosmead Place residence as hundreds of well-wishers trooped in to wish her a happy birthday.

Sirima Bandaranaike, born to a land-owning

aristocratic family in 1916, was forced into politics after the 1959 assassination of Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike, her husband. She became the world's first elected woman premier a year later.

The dynastic succession was firmly consolidated by daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga who became the all-powerful president in November 1994.

The daughter made her mother prime minister for a third term setting another record for the

world's first mother-and-daughter duo to rule a country.

She received her well-wishers while seated on a chair in front of a picture of herself taken together with assassinated Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who had been a close friend of the Bandaranaike family.

Her deteriorating health due to arthritis has fuelled rumours about retirement and triggered rivalry among several ministers who are known to be staking a claim for the ceremonial but prestigious post.

7 miners injured in Siberia blast

MOSCOW (AFP) — Seven coalminers were hospitalised with burns after a methane explosion in a mine in the Kuzbass region of western Siberia Friday, Interfax reported.

Doctors said the injured miners were in satisfactory condition.

A total of 35 miners were in the Lenin pit at Mezhdurechensk near Kemerovo when the blast happened, but all were rescued and a subsequent

fire was brought under control.

Kemerovo Governor Aman Tuleyev sent a special commission to the mine to investigate what caused the blast.

The Kuzbass and Vorkuta in the far north are Russia's largest coal regions, and both have suffered from the chronic wage delays and inter-enterprise debts afflicting the Russian economy.

In one of Russia's worst

mining disasters in decades, 67 miners were killed in an explosion in December at Zyryanovskaya, a pit near Novokuznetsk in the Kuzbass.

Russia has announced plans to shut down 86 of its 200 coal mines in 1998, and the World Bank is funding a programme aimed at easing the social pain of restructuring in the ailing industry.

Ar
Abe
Con

DESPITE THE liquidity crunch, the Company was JD2-4,200 operating in 1997. Board Chairman told an ordinary meeting. He pointed out profit last year which brings the earnings to JD2-4,200. Mr. Abed indicated the company had not completed its financial year. He also pointed out the company's chairman said the company was now operating with new capital.

REUTERS The Bu

Currency	USD
US Dollar	
OE Mark	0.5545
GB Sterling	1.6552
CH Franc	0.6839
JP Yen	0.0074
CA Dollar	0.6932
IT Lira	0.0006
NL Guilder	0.4932
FR Franc	0.1653

Currency	USD
US Dollar	
Jordan Dinar	1.4124
Saudi Riyal	0.2656
Bahrain Dinar	0.35
Qatar Dinar	0.374
Kuwait Dinar	3.3755
Emirates Dinar	0.2723
Lebanese Lira	0.15
Egyptian	0.257

Oil	Last	Change
Brent	14.36	12.94
W. Texas	15.20	15.93
Bonny	14.26	12.94
Oubai	12.77	12.47
UL Gas	157.00	154.00

Metal	Price
Gold (oz's)	306.3
Silver (oz's)	6.25
Platinum (oz's)	413
AL (3 Months)	1445
CU (3 Months)	1525
Zinc (3 Months)	1114
Lead (3 Months)	575
Ni (3 Months)	5400

Bourse	Index
New York	DOW J
New York	S&P
London	FTSE
Tokyo	NIKKEI
Paris	CAC
Frankfurt	DAX

Commodity	Price
Coffee (c/lbs)	152.25
Cocoa (5/ton)	1754
Sugar (5/ton)	254
Wheat (5/ton)	58
Soya (c/lbs)	27.94
Tea (5/ton)	148
Barley (5/ton)	0
Rice (5/ton)	400

Jo

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Features

Hebron offers grim model for co-existence

Patrick Cockburn in the West Bank reports on ritual violence within an intricate mosaic of sectarian geography

A MONTH ago Jewish settlers in Hebron celebrated a religious festival by dressing up a child as Dr. Baruch Goldstein, the settler who walked into the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in the city in 1994 and shot dead 29 Palestinian worshippers. As part of the fun the child wore a stethoscope round his neck and carried a toy gun.

In Nablus, the largest autonomous Palestinian city on the West Bank, the high point of a rally of Hamas, the Islamic organisation, last week was setting fire to a large model of an Israeli bus. The message was that Hamas should repeat its bombings of 1996, targeted primarily against buses, which killed some 60 Israelis.

Nobody doubts that the 1.5 million Palestinians and 140,000 Jewish settlers on the West Bank hate each other. But the failure of Israel to complete the withdrawal from the West Bank, which started in 1995 as part of an interim phase of the Oslo accords, means that the West Bank remains a mosaic of competing authorities.

If Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, gets his way, the West Bank will be permanently divided into an intricate pattern of Israeli and Palestinian islands, which will make the sectarian geography of Belfast or Beirut look simple.

Nowhere is the friction as great as in Hebron, the effective capital of the southern West Bank. Here, since last year, between the Israeli army and the settlers' guard 40 families of Jewish settlers, occupying a fifth of the city, inhabited by 120,000 Palestinians. The dividing line between the two is the scene of continual, but small scale street battles in which there is a ritual exchange of stones and rubber bullets between Palestinian boys and Israeli soldiers.

The problem is that the settlers of Hebron are the cutting edge of the settler movement who believe that Hebron was given by God to them.

It could all get a great deal worse. In his headquarters overlooking Hebron, Colonel Yigal Sharon, the commander of the Israeli brigade in the Hebron region, says confidently: "Even in the case of massive disorder the IDF [Israeli Defence Force] has an answer to practically everything." Asked if the present division of powers is unstable, he stresses that the present agreement is an interim one.

So far at least violence has been limited this year. Three Palestinians were killed at a road block by Israeli soldiers. Another Palestinian boy was killed by a rubber bullet.

Colonel Sharon insists that his men do not fire rubber bullets above chest level or from close range, but admits: "It's not an accurate weapon." He adds that only if he guarantees Palestinian security, can he protect the Jews in the city.

It looks an impossible job. During the Passover holiday and to celebrate Israeli independence day some 10,000 Israelis a day were visiting the Cave of the Patriarchs, where Abraham lies buried. But Israeli police were only allowing them to enter the city on buses. Colonel Sharon said they could easily cross into the Palestinian zone by accident.

The problem is that the settlers of Hebron are the cutting edge of the settler movement who believe that Hebron was given by God to them. Out of 304 legal cases opened against settlers in the West Bank in 1997, 70 per cent were against the small number of Jews in Hebron.

The settlers have also been extraordinarily successful in capping the Oslo accords. As a student, Yigal Amir, the assassin of Yitzhak Rabin, then the Israeli prime minister, organised trips of supporters to the heart of Hebron. They remain a focus for the Israeli right and their influence has grown. Earlier this year they were able to get Yaakov Ish-Yemeni, the commander of the local police station, removed because he criticised the settlers' tactics.

The recipe under which Israel withdrew from part of Hebron last year guaranteed continual friction. It was agreed only after prolonged negotiations and U.S. mediation.

U.S. and Israeli plans for the future of the rest of the West Bank envisage only a very limited Israeli withdrawal. Both sides will hold power in a very small area. Instead of an example to be avoided, Hebron will become the model for future relations between Israelis and Palestinians.

—The Independent

University students in California fear re-segregation of colleges

By Andrew Quinn
Reuters

BERKELEY, California — The door to the American dream may be shuddering to a close on this gleaming campus of the University of California.

With its leafy plazas, modern libraries and sweeping lawns, U.C. Berkeley has long been hailed as a triumph of U.S. public education, a place where the richness and diversity of California have forged an institution of higher learning admired around the world.

Next year, however, that mix will change. With the passage of California's Proposition 209, a trail-blazing law aimed at rolling back decades of so-called affirmative action policies, far fewer black and Hispanic students will enrol. Proponents of "race-blind" admissions say the new policy underscores an unbiased commitment to excellence where students are welcomed strictly according to academic merit, not the colour of their skin. But opponents say 209 and its fallout mark the re-segregation of some of America's most selective public universities and a big step backward in California's long experiment with building a more inclusive society.

"This is a sad, sad moment," said Irami Osel-Frimpong, a black junior from Orange County, California. "What we face here is a real crisis."

After a bitter fight over affirmative action, California voters narrowly passed proposition 209 in 1996, junking policies in

place since the 1960s aimed at promoting women and "underrepresented" minorities such as blacks and Hispanics.

Full effect seen

Court battles delayed implementation, but this month the full impact of the new law became clear as the first batch of post-affirmative action admissions letters were mailed out. New black admissions to Berkeley, the flagship of the U.C. system, fell by 64 per cent. Only 191 black students are being offered places in

plunged to 13 per cent from nearly 20 per cent last year. The new racial bead count, although widely predicted, was met with shock by educators and others.

"My own personal emotions are a mixture of disappointment, anger, frustration, hope and resolve," Berkeley's Chancellor Robert Bedroff said at a news conference. "To educators, legislators, parents and Californians as a whole there are bigger and more profound questions that will need answers."

have an adverse impact," said Tom Eood, one of the authors. That adverse impact looks likely to continue. School officials worry that even the few top-ranked black and Hispanic students who are admitted to Berkeley and UCLA will go to elite Harvard, Stanford or Yale instead — drawn, ironically, by a prospect of more racial diversity at those private schools.

At Berkeley's Boalt Hall Law School, for instance, all of the 15 black students offered places last year went elsewhere, and

top 4 per cent of graduates from each high school in the state, no matter how their scores stack up.

Activist student groups have launched a petition to put the "Equal Education Opportunity Initiative" on the November ballot, asking California voters to reconsider the merits of affirmative action in education.

"I think there are only two things that can change the situation," said Rashid Ibrahim, a Boalt Hall Law student who is part of the EEOI campaign. "Either we change people's consciousness or we change the law. We need to do both."

But many students at Berkeley, struggling between classes or sunning themselves outside the student centre, said they saw no easy way to turn back the tide of re-segregation.

"Basically these new numbers show the reversal of everything we have worked for the last 20 years," said Rishi Chandra, a junior from Los Angeles. "Excellence at a university does not just mean academics, it means the entire experience, and that is going to get worse."

Mark Tak, an Asian-American sophomore from Glendale, said he felt the new numbers were "kind of bad" for California but he quickly added that the racial difference would not have much of an impact on the life of most students.

"This is not like the 1960s, when people cared about politics," he said. "People come to the university now to get a job."

...[O]pponents say [Propositions] 209 and its fallout mark the re-segregation of some of America's most selective public universities and a big step backward in California's long experiment with building a more inclusive society.

the 8,034-member incoming freshman class.

Hispanic admissions at Berkeley also dropped sharply, as did those of American Indians. Admissions rose by three percent for whites and seven percent for Asian-Americans, already the largest single ethnic group at Berkeley.

Blacks, Hispanics and American Indians make up 37 per cent of California's population but they will account for only about 10 per cent of Berkeley's new freshmen, down from 23 per cent in 1997. At the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), admissions of those minority groups

"Shame, shame, shame," fumed June Jordan, a Berkeley professor of black studies.

Defenders pleased

The authors of proposition 209 remarked mildly that the data simply showed how warped California's old system had become as selective U.C. campuses admitted black and Hispanic students with test scores far lower than those of Asian American and white students they rejected.

"If you use brute force to get the numbers [of minorities] up, and then you remove that, of course you are going to

black applications are down 20 per cent this year, leaving officials muttering about the "chilling effect" of 209.

The question now at Berkeley and around the country is: what next? University officials plan to campaign hard to entice the admitted minority students to attend, hoping that personal phone calls and outreach programmes will convince them they are still wanted at California's public universities.

In the state capital of Sacramento, meanwhile, legislators are floating proposals to adjust admissions policies so that Berkeley would admit the

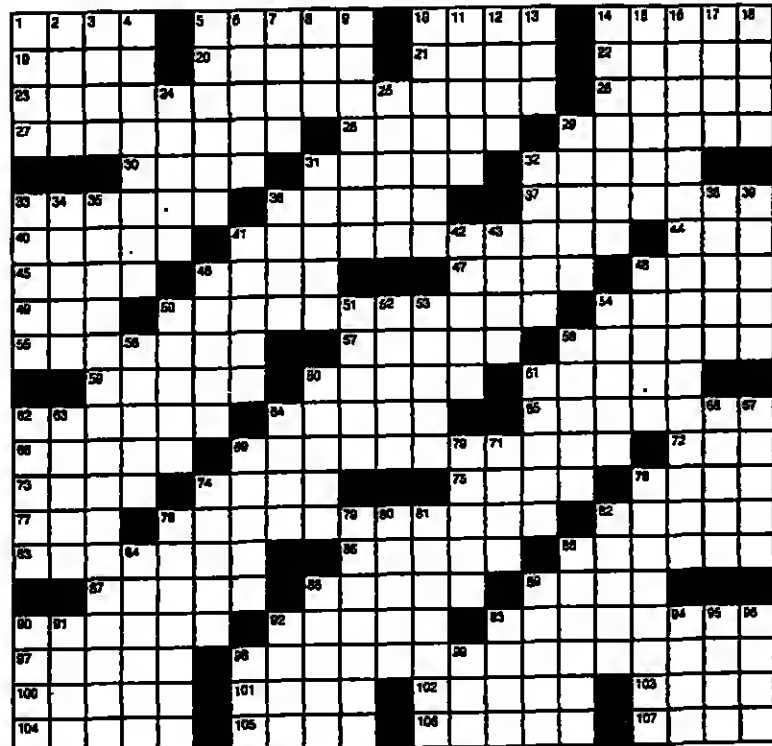
The Saturday Crossword

BOATYARD

By Frances Hansen, Metuchen, New Jersey

- ACROSS**
- 1 Melrose pink blue, e.g.
 - 5 Daisies
 - 10 Right on maps
 - 14 Flatfish catches
 - 12 Oriental nursemaid
 - 20 Country hit song by Tom T. Hall
 - 21 Rowed the inner man?
 - 22 Net cool
 - 23 BARK
 - 25 Military foul-up
 - 27 ... for (had a craving)
 - 28 Tantalus
 - 29 More bleached
 - 30 Jug handles
 - 31 Memphis song, "Street Blues"
 - 32 Gladly to the point
 - 33 Safe
 - 35 Old-time entertainer Lenny
 - 37 Bright on the landscape
 - 40 Abrupt transitions
 - 41 LIGHTER
 - 44 Defensive reply to a smash
 - 45 Coffee servers
 - 46 Fiddlehead
 - 47 Will, the actor
 - 48 Amorphous mass
 - 49 Actress Steele
 - 50 SHILL
 - 51 Old hag
 - 55 More than two
 - 57 Verdicted
 - 58 Grated
 - 59 Walks off the stage

- 60 Musical conclusions
- 61 Green years
- 62 Allowance
- 64 Dyed using indigo
- 65 Cockle's clan
- 68 Participate in chess
- 69 GONDOLA
- 72 Ref's relative
- 73 Hole-making tools
- 74 Morsery of "Star Trek: The Next Generation"
- 75 Elaborate inlay
- 76 Hoops grp.
- 77 Hip character
- 78 SMACK
- 82 Stir from sleep
- 83 Removal mark
- 85 Oxygen
- 86 Sound
- 88 Woodland minor delirious
- 87 Lucky-boy
- 89 Picking agent
- 90 Diminutive ending
- 90 Handles the ship's helm
- 92 Planet
- 93 500 B.C. Greek poet
- 97 Term up
- 98 YAWL
- 100 Peachy keen
- 101 On the sheltered side
- 102 Surpass
- 103 Suffer heartbreak
- 104 Seats for several
- 105 That woman's
- 106 Farm equipment manufacturer
- 107 Mumford or Busby



Last Sunday's Crossword Solved

- 1 Short race
- 2 Athletic org.
- 3 Mark
- 4 Drastic reorganizations
- 5 Coyote State's capital
- 6 Pigeon play, "A Lesson from"
- 7 Tadpole's milieu
- 8 "Marta"
- 9 Sonnet stanzas
- 10 Bites out
- 11 Crop up
- 12 In one's right mind
- 13 Hardin and Cobb
- 14 More forward
- 15 Pops and Linnex
- 16 DORY
- 17 Unending sentence?
- 18 Side track
- 19 Boes and Barlette
- 20 Pacific pact abbr.
- 21 More ironic
- 22 South Africa's first prime minister
- 23 Newsworthy
- 24 Punched
- 25 Ghouly
- 26 LAUNCH
- 27 Downtown
- 28 Arched of TV sports
- 29 Flowed back
- 30 Christmas carols
- 41 S-shaped
- 42 Nevada lake
- 43 Brooklyn art institute
- 44 Buoys horse
- 50 Fabric pattern
- 51 "Eating ... 1982"
- 52 Black comedy
- 53 Madrid museum
- 54 Jump, as a fence
- 55 CEOs, VPs, etc.
- 56 Calky part
- 60 Scale the heights
- 61 Dashboard gauges, briefly
- 62 War's end
- 63 Saded of Egypt
- 64 Indonesian island
- 66 Burning coal
- 67 Bridges
- 68 Roundup finale
- 70 Tolerate
- 71 Bernhardt's rival
- 72 Eponora
- 74 ... and whey
- 76 Semiaquatic rodent
- 78 Hepburn and Meadows
- 79 British trucks
- 80 Self-imposed absence
- 81 Ignited
- 82 Keep an eye on
- 84 Nap in Nogales
- 85 Rice to Chinese
- 86 Sparring dog?
- 88 Jump-rope turner
- 89 serif type
- 91 Small cottage
- 92 Artifice
- 93 Allow ending?
- 94 For one
- 95 Workplace injury
- 96 Requirement
- 98 Morse symbol
- 99 Felling tool

Zion on-line

The Middle East on the Internet

By Nigel Parry

ONE HAS to admire Israel's industriousness for the sheer amount of material they have put on the Internet in such a short period of time. A recent estimate, released at the Israeli Business Management Centre convention in Tel Aviv on Feb. 26, suggested that some 10,000 Israeli websites exist on the World Wide Web, 10 times more than the number two years ago. In addition, it was estimated that some 170,000 Israeli subscribers are connected to the Internet. In contrast, there are about 149 Palestinian websites and perhaps 2,000 Palestinians are connected. Both estimates represent just over 1 per cent of the Israeli figures.

A good place to start surfing is probably the government's on-line offering. An index of government websites is available at <http://www.index.gov.il/>. Here you will find a list of the websites of ministries, municipalities and the media. With respect to the latter, web-surfers seeking a saner English language newspaper than the Jerusalem Post (<http://www.jpost.co.il/>), inexplicably declared "the sixth most popular online newspaper in the world," will be relieved to find the more independently minded Ha'aretz at <http://www.haaretz.co.il/eng/>.

Perhaps one of the most hyped government sites at the moment is the Israel at Fifty site, <http://www.israel.org/mfa/israel50/index.html>. Amongst photo exhibitions, statistics, and events, you will find the May 16, 1948 edition of the (then) Palestine Post, now the Jerusalem Post. The editorial, "A nation that has freed itself," found at <http://www.jpost.co.il/com/1948/editorial.html>, makes an interesting observation: "And as it can be said that the subject Jew was an assurance of subjection for the Arab, it is right — it must be right — to say that the free Jew is a promise of freedom for the Arab. In that will lie a righteousness of the new State of Israel."

Settlers' homepages these days are a high-tech affair, replete with video and other multimedia trappings. However, the ideology behind the technology remains the same. The Hebron Settlers' Website, <http://www.virtual.co.il/com/muni->

ties/israel/hebron/, is perhaps the best example of mutton dressed as lamb. Permanently heading its features column is a piece on the 1929 massacre. The Purim Torah commentary on the book of Esther asks why the people of Amalek — men, women, children and even the animals — needed to be wiped out. "The answer is not exceedingly difficult," comes the answer. "What is Israel's job in this world? The prophet Yesayahau (43:21) says: 'This people I created, they shall tell of my splendour.' In other words, Israel's task is to reveal the glory of the Lord. Amalek is the exact opposite of Israel." No prizes for guessing who Amalek is in the current Hebron settler world view. Coexistence is not a concept given any consideration.

Surfers depressed with Israeli intransigence in the peace process can always see a lighter side to Israel at Ohr Somayach's Top 10 Jewish Humour page at <http://www.ohr.org.il/judaism/humor/top10/topten.htm>.

Indeed the settler community has produced material that defies rational explanation. In much of the material on the website of the YESHA Council — <http://www.yesha.virtul.co.il/> — we read assertions like: "While the Arabs are free to build at will and chose the locations that will best advance their position, Jewish building is verboten," a statement that has no basis in any reality. Having said that, useful details such as the number of Jews present in each settlement and the religious/non-religious ratio (65 per cent non-observant Jews, 35 per cent observant Jews) make it a worthwhile stop for the researcher.

A general Israel starting point would be Virtual Jerusalem <http://www.virtuljerusalem.com/>, which has informa-

tion covering everything from tourism to business and technology information, the Torah and tradition, arts and leisure, media, shopping and a devilishly tempting "Ask the Rabbi." For those interested in the development of Israel's booming high-tech and business sector, visit Link Magazine at <http://www.link.co.il/>, where you will find articles galore and the LINK 100, a list of Israel's top 100 publicly traded companies.

Surfers depressed with Israeli intransigence in the peace process can always see a lighter side to Israel at Ohr Somayach's Top 10 Jewish Humour page at <http://www.ohr.org.il/judaism/humor/top10/topten.htm>. In his "Top 10 Reasons for not attending Synagogue on Shabbat," you will find "My stockbroker is now attending services in a Federal Penitentiary." For another positive, although serious, side to Israel on-line, the definitive happy-people Israeli website must be Ariga at <http://www.ariga.com/>, run by Israeli writer Robert Rosenberg. Its continually renewing magazine format is an excellent first stop for those wanting to see what the peace camp is up to. Features include articles from activists, a more sane Torah portion than you will find on the Hebron settlers' site, Israeli poetry and short stories, food writing and scores of the latest links to the newest Israeli and Palestinian resources.

Offering an overview of the 10,000 Israeli websites of all shapes and colours is an impossible task in such a limited space and one best left to the experts. Nadav Har'El, a mathematician working for the Israeli government, is perhaps the best person to take on this mantle. Since 1994, he has been editing the (almost) Complete Guide to the WWW in Israel, found at <http://www.math.technion.ac.il/~nyh/iisrael/index.html>. With over 1,600 links, sorted in a fashion similar to Yahoo!, it is the best option from those who wish to explore further by topic. A more corporate offering, the Israeli Internet Guide at <http://www.ncystadt.org/israel/>, offers a text-based search, for those that prefer the Alta Vista or Excite type approach to the Web.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Abed says Livestock and Poultry Company 'has fully recovered'

AMMAN — DESPITE THE lack of necessary liquidity except through borrowing from banks, the Livestock and Poultry Company was able to achieve JD274,200 operational profit during 1997, Board Chairman Adbel Abed told an ordinary general assembly meeting. He pointed out that the net profit last year amounted to JD99,602 which brings the total retained earnings to JD126,100.

Mr. Abed indicated that the company rescheduled its debt to the Bank of Jordan and that full repayment will be completed this year. The company also repaid around JD40,000 of obligations to the Jordan Kuwait Bank, the chairman said noting that all dues to the Social Security Corporation were settled.

During 1997, the company conducted a full renovation of the farms and cars which at the beginning of the year were nearly non-operative for not being maintained for many years. According to Mr. Abed, the company is now operating at full capacity along with new farms that were rented and added to the existing ones.

"The company has fully recovered and I see it strongly on its feet in 1998," Mr. Abed stressed. He indicated that the future plan for the Livestock and Poultry Company include raising production efficiency, reducing bank debt and maintaining some facilities to bring them back to production if the necessary funds become available. Furthermore, the plan aims at strengthening the standing of the company in the local market and at bringing it up to the level where it can import its needs instead of totally depending on the local market.

Mr. Abed said sales in 1997 amounted to around JD9.3 million and expected the figure to rise in 1998. According to the annual report, the balance sheet at the end of December 1997 totalled JD4.67 million, about five per cent higher than the 1996 total. Shareholders' equity amounted to JD3.48 million while net fixed assets stood at JD3.7 million (Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

'97 financial results boost trading at AFM

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordanian

AMMAN — Turnover at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) increased by 46.9 per cent in the past week compared with the previous week due to the trading in the shares of the companies that recorded tangible result in their 1997 annual reports, a broker said Friday.

The weekly AFM bulletin showed that last week's turnover amounted to JD4.7 million compared to JD3.2 million, with an average daily turnover of JD900,000.

Naim Nageeb, a broker at the stock market, said the increase in the turnover was due to the five-day trading last week compared with two days in the previous week which was followed by the 'Eid Al Adha' feast.

Mr. Nageeb said the industrial sector received the bulk of the weekly trading, with a turnover amounting to JD1.9 million, or 42.1 per cent.

"This was due to the annual results of some of industrial firms that appeared in the past few days which recorded good results and decided to distribute dividends to their shareholders," Mr. Nageeb told the Jordan Times.

He emphasised that among the industrial firms that attracted dealers in the past week's trading were the pharmaceutical companies and the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC).

Mr. Nageeb indicated that the services ranked second with a turnover amounting to JD1.3 million, or 28.2 per cent, followed by the banking sector with JD1.2 million, or 26.7 per cent and finally the insurance sector with JD140,000, or three per cent.

He said that trading in the services sector focused on the shares of Jordanian Electricity Company (JEC) due to the "good results" recorded in 1997.

The Arab and Housing banks took the lion's share of the banking sector trading.

The broker stressed that the trading in Housing Bank shares is expected to rise "with the bank's intention to double its capital to JD100 million and to distribute a free share to each shareholder."

The general price index declined from 170.6 point down 169.7 point, or .86 point.

Mr. Nageeb attributed the drop in the price index to dealers who were cautious to trade in the market following the 'Eid Al Adha' holiday with many deciding to wait and watch the AFM activities before taking any decision.

Out of the 87 firms that changed hands at the AFM shares of 28 firms registered increase in prices, 38 companies recorded declines while 21 firms witnessed no change in their prices.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.8033	0.9333	1.4980	131.43	1.4300	1783.00	2.0319	6.0485	
DE Mark	0.5548	1.0000	0.3287	0.8290	72.90	0.7934	987.87	1.2622	3.3524
GB Sterling	1.8856	0.3076	1.0000	2.5178	221.51	2.4104	3001.15	3.4201	10.1808
CH Franc	0.6889	120.53	0.3967	1.0000	87.91	0.9567	1191.29	135.78	4.0412
JP Yen	0.0078	1.3708	0.4808	1.1380	1.0000	1.0870	13.58	154.40	4.6943
CA Dollar	0.6993	1.2916	0.4225	1.0666	1.09	1.0000	1.4651	4.3285	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0112	0.3323	0.0638	1358.14	0.8021	1.128	3.3911	
NL Guilder	0.4922	88.76	0.2917	73.58	84.69	0.7041	877.01	2.8767	
FR Franc	0.1653	0.2880	0.0880	24.7058	21.72	0.2365	33.58	33.5800	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7506	0.3770	3.6406	0.3052	3.6727	1627.20	3.4160
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2898	0.5317	6.1547	0.4305	6.1801	2164.02	4.8181
Saudi Riyal	0.2696	0.1890	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.98	407.20	0.3108
Bahraini Dinar	2.65	1.8808	9.9491	1.0000	9.66	0.8095	9.74	4051.25	8.0617
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0302	0.10302	1.0000	0.0838	1.01	419.50	0.3383
Kuwait Dinar	3.2765	2.3231	12.2897	1.2352	11.83	1.003	5.0033	0.3383	
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	0.1028	0.9912	0.0831	1.01	415.82	0.3381
Lebanese L1000	0.65	0.4642	2.4558	0.2468	2.3338	0.1998	2.4049	1.2288	
Egyptian	0.2927	0.2076	1.0979	0.1104	1.0657	0.0893	1.0751	447.07	

Energy					Mid-East Currencies				
Oil	Last	Review	Oil	Review	Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY
Brent	14.36	13.94	Oil	Review	SA Riyal	0.2658	0.4811	0.15818	0.39877
W. Texas	16.20	15.93	Oil	Review	AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4811	0.15818	0.40722
Bonny	14.36	13.94	Oil	Review	KW Dinar	3.2765	2.3231	12.2897	4.89556
Dubai	12.77	12.47	Oil	Review	BH Dinar	0.3770	0.2748	1.57381	3.96568
UL Gas	157.00	154.00	Oil	Review	CY Pound	1.8921	3.4128	1.122	2.8292

Metal Prices					Libor Fixing				
Metal	Bid	Offer	Period	1 - 3	Month	3 - 6	Month	6 - 12	Year
Gold (oz's)	308.5	309	USD	5.6719	5.7422	5.7813	5.8063		
Silver (oz's)	6.25	6.31	GBP	7.4167	7.5052	7.5052	7.5000		
Platinum (oz's)	413	415	JPY	0.6354	0.6875	0.6875	0.7083		
AL (3 Months)	1445	1448	DEM	3.6717	3.7968	3.9063	4.0524		
CU (3 Months)	1825	1828	FRF	3.6371	1.8015	1.7344	1.5375		
Zinc (3 Months)	1114	1117	CHF	1.4531	3.6387	3.7500	3.9888		
Lead (3 Months)	575	577	ITL	5.5870	5.2280	4.9170			
Ni (3 Months)	5400	5420							

Main Equity Indices					JOD Cross Rates				
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	Currency	Buy	Sell		
New York	DOW JONES	9088.03	11.48	0.13	US Dollar	0.708	0.710		
New York	S&P 500	1109.57	1.4	0.13	GB Sterling	1.15	1.198		
London	FTSE 100	5931.8	-70.2	-1.17	DE Mark	0.3923	0.3943		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16703.8	-179.97	-1.13	CH Franc	0.4723	0.4747		
Paris	CAC 40	3862.77	16.83	0.44	FR Franc	0.117	0.1178		
Frankfurt	DAX	6268.75	-65.39	-1.04	JP Yen	0.6396	0.6423		
					NL Guilder	0.3485	0.3502		
					IT Lira	0.3957	0.3987		

Energy					JOD Cross Rates				
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Commodity	Last	Currency	Buy	Sell		
Coffee (c/lbs)	182.33	Spot	Coffee (c/lbs)	182.33	US Dollar	0.708	0.710		
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1798	Spot	Cocoa (\$/ton)	1798	GB Sterling	1.15	1.198		
Sugar (\$/ton)	254.7	Spot	Sugar (\$/ton)	254.7	DE Mark	0.3923	0.3943		
Wheat (\$/ton)	85	Spot	Wheat (\$/ton)	85	CH Franc	0.4723	0.4747		
Soyas (c/lbs)	27.84	Spot	Soyas (c/lbs)	27.84	FR Franc	0.117	0.1178		
Tea (c/lbs/kg)	148	Spot	Tea (c/lbs/kg)	148	JP Yen	0.6396	0.6423		
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot	Barley (\$/bsh)	0	NL Guilder	0.3485	0.3502		
Rice (\$/ton)	400	Spot	Rice (\$/ton)	400	IT Lira	0.3957	0.3987		

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET															
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - EINSHAM															
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179															
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (11/04/1998 - 15/04/1998)															
WEEKLY REPORT															
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS															
NO. OF CONTRACTS	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF CONTRACTS	VALUE TRADED	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE PRICE	TURNOVER	NO. OF TRADING DAYS	
344,000	222,500 ARAB BANK	14.1	1.19	35	2290	817490	249.00	250.00	243.00	244.00	-2.00	249.194	.064	5	
1,780	1,440 JOR. NATIONAL BK.	-	0.00	22	2290	29000	1.77	1.78	1.72	1.72	-0.04	1.749	.051	5	
1,370	2,250 BANK OF JORDAN	4.1	0.00	4	1850	2459	1.34	1.35	1.30	1.30	-0.04	1.329	.012	2	
1,000	920 KIS-EAST INV. SR.	45.7	0.00	2	1000	1000	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.000	.010	1	
1,790	1,720 INDUSTRIAL DEV. SR.	9.2	7.81	48	42812	78978	1.79	1.82	1.78	1.80	-0.04	1.799	.348	5	
5,500	4,870 THE JORDANIAN BK.	14.9	2.70	29	20974	112112	5.50	5.49	6.22	6.22	-0.19	5.455	.042	5	
1,900	1,910 JOR. FINANCIAL BANK	0.00	0.00	10	12247	32098	1.81	1.82	1.79	1.80	-0.01	1.802	.002	4	
470	590 JOR. ONLY BANK	4.1	10.14	95	145724	110772	4.2	4.29	4.1	4.1	-0.07	4.468	.829	5	
2,800	3,800 ARAB JOR. INV. SR.	40.5	2.51	1	10000	24400	2.80	2.64	2.99	2.44	-0.14	2.440	.007	1	
1,990	1,910 JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	14.9	0.00	52	9920	17857	1.91	1.95	1.76	1.79	-0.15	1.854	.051	5	
1,030	1,020 UNION BK. SAV. INV.	170.4	0.00	2	151	151	1.03	1.07	1.07	1.07	-0.05	1.040	.001	2	
1,970	1,970 JOR. INV. FID. BANK	11.2	0.00	9	2550	4541	1.97	1.97	1.75	1.75	-0.22	1.781	.024	1	
1,470	1,920 JOR. INV. FID. BANK/NEW	0.00	0.00	2	354	572	1.42	1.92	1.42	1.43	0.01	1.419	.007	1	
890	820 BSH. AL-HAL (BSHMA)	0.00	17.24	13	3950	2408	0.89	0.88	0.89	0.82	-0.01	0.892	.198	3	
3,940	3,790 ARAB BANKING CO.	31.3	0.00	1	1000	2700	2.79	3.70	3.70	3.70	-0.09	2.700	.007	1	
BANKS SECTOR															
251				251	397442	1239419	INDEX NUMBER : 239.24								CHANGE : -1.031
2,110	1,920 JOR. PREMIER INSUR.	9.3	11.24	29	49100	105070	2.11	2.22	3.07	3.22	-0.11	2.140	2.222	5	
INSURANCE SECTOR															
29				29	49100	106070	INDEX NUMBER : 122.18								CHANGE : 0.531
2,330	2,000 JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.4	4.57	105	62954	114041	2.32	2.34	2.31	2.19	-0.07	2.191	.352	5	
3,110	2,040 JORD. ELECTRICITY	14.5	4.29	7	1344	2870	2.09	2.35	2.19	2.25	-0.26	2.040	.041	1	
5,220	4,080 HIGH MOUNTAINS	49.3	0.00	2	1150	5384	4.50	4.70	4.51	4.51	-0.01	4.683	.987	2	
3,320	2,320 JOR. PETROL. RESERVE	13.6	2.95	1	100	304	2.30	3.04	3.04	3.04	-0.16	3.000	.012	1	
1,110	1,020 NAT. PORTFOLIO	42.7	0.00	88	60750	55729	1.08	1.13	1.07	1.07	-0.01	1.109	1.005	5	
950	960 REAL ESTATE INV.	28.0	0.00	4	171	166	.95	.93	.92	.92	-0.03	.912	.004	1	
410	380 JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	-	0.00	6	2100	759	.38	.37	.39	.36	-0.07	.341	.092	1	
9,580	9,200 ALARA	9.2	9.92	4	343	3128	9.20	9.15	9.09	9.09	-0.24	9.100	.017	3	
1,300	1,110 KIS. EAST BOTTLERS	38.3	0.00	2	1050	1050	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	-	1.300	.011	1	
4,410	4,140 JORD. BANK INTL. INV. SER.	4.90	0.00	3	560	2725	4.15	4.20	4.15	4.20	-0.05	4.192	.009	2	
890	920 SARNA EDUCATION	17.0	0.00	11	9200	8906	.96	.97	.96	.97	-0.01	.968	.204	3	
1,570	1,520 UNIFIED CO.	9.6	7.43	72	20860	20956	1.55	1.59	1.45	1.48	-0.01	1.486	.417	5	
670	620 UNION LAND DEV.	-	0.00	9	12100	9773	.92	.97	.93	.97	-0.04	.924	.262	3	
SERVICES SECTOR															
316				316	162192	235885	INDEX NUMBER : 110.34								CHANGE : 0.431
1,100	1,080 ATTACHEES	-	0.00	2	4200	4620	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	-	1.100	.160	1	
2,780	3,710 JOR. CEMENT FACT.	37.2	3.79	111	55369	159983	2.73	2.95	2.75	2.90	-0.17	3.040	.991	5	
3,200	3,200 JOR. PETROFABRIK BIRME	8.5	2.28	11	33983	103649	3.20	3.10	3.06	3.06	-0.15	3.040	.077	3	
10,510	10,510 JOR. PETROL. RESERVE	10.6	0.11	49	167675	107111	10.51	10.39	10.75	10.99	-0.25	10.930	6.30	6	
5,550	5,550 JORDAN TRADING	8.6	7.27	6	859	3049	5.55	5.55	5.50	5.50	-0.05	5.504	.955	4	
1,364	1,190 WOODEN INDUSTRIES	12.6	6.90	20	6160	8757	1.36	1.46	1.32	1.46	-0.14	1.424	.616	1	
3,240	1,120 INDUSTRIAL JON. AGRI.	-	0.00	8	3476	4301	1.29	1.26	1.15	1.16	-0.14	1.237	.079	3	
6,350	6,040 ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	27.7	0.00	191	62354	33816	6.35	6.34	6.34	6.34	-0.01	6.343	.383	5	
1,290	1,200 JOR. PIPES MANUFACT.	7.1	7.46	38	8200	11064	1.29	1.37	1.23	1.34	-0.05	1.349	.253	5	
1,970	1,700 GENERAL MINING	117.1	4.19	1	300	501	1.97	1.47	1.67	1.67	-0.08	1.670	.100	1	
830	820 KAFIA INDUSTRIES	-	0.00	6	28650	23122	0.83	0.83	.75	.83	-	.772	1.910	3	
1,240	6,700 DAK ALQADIA DR. INV.	7.1	6.94	33	2638	15474	5.79	6.90	5.85	6.89	-0.07	5.866	.044	3	
7,910	7,210 ARAB ALUM. IND.	6	6.6	6	763	2129	7.91	7.92	7.82	7.82	-0.04	7.914	.363	5	
6,510	4,670 LIVESTOCKS & POULTRY	16.6	0.00	95	115750	50338	5.0	6.1	4.9	4.9	-0.01	5.044	3.608	4	
730	670 ARAB PAPER CORP. TRD.	21.7	0.00	20	33632	33636	.67	.73	.67	.71	-0.04	.703	.261	4	
560	540 NATIONAL INDUS.	-	0.00	13	10427	5673	.65	.55	.64	.65	-	.544	.714	4	
430	400 INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	-	0.00	98	90881	35744	1.41	1.41	.38	.38	-0.01	.393	3.173	5	
630	620 JOR. ROCHMOOL 3985.	315.3	7	34	652	1300	1.65	1.55	1.55	1.55	-	1.550	.016	6	
1,430	1,400 UNIV. CHEM. INDUS.	33.9	6.88	13	1760	2409	1.41	1.42	1.36	1.39	-0.05	1.376	.117	5	
1,230	1,330 KATL. CABLE WIRE. KAPAC	27.4	0.00	30	17196	19965	1.14	1.19	1.13	1.14	-	1.144	.229	4	
600	590 JOR. SULPHO-CHEM.	-	0.00	34	30250	11729	.58	.59	.57	.58	-	.579	.460	5	
1,390	1,230 ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	14.9	4.65	20	4601	6116	1.34	1.36	1.32	1.33	-0.01	1.339	.093	3	
1,090	920 UNIV. HOUS. INDUS.	14.0	9.83	49	33900	20938	.92	.87	.88	.88	-	.874	.363	5	
790	710 JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	3.3	14.71	91	41322	28232	.71	.71	.48	.98	-0.01	.486	.517	4	
1,480	1,490 KATL. CHELONIE	10.2	6.85	20	5883	8641	1.48	1.48	1.46	1.46	-0.03	1.469	.083	6	
1,050	990 JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	14.1	10.00	87	98697	96679	1.03	1.04	1.00	1.00	-0.03	1.010	1.224	6	
1,360	1,300 KIS. EASY READY WIRE	48.2	0.00	4	850	1197	1.34	1.38	1.37	1.27	-0.03	1.271	.011	2	
1,200	1,140 UNIV. TORONCO	9.5	0.00	19	1234	12419	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	-	1.180	.323	2	
1,060	1,030 UNION CH. & VEG.	47.7	0.00	74	64700	69660	1.06	1.10	1.06	1.05	-	1.065	1.490	6	
860	780 JORDAN STEEL	9.3	8.43	46	82289	98247	.86	.05	.82	.83	-0.02	.831	.549	6	
650	910 MID-EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	99	153300	94992	4.2	.95	.90	.43	-0.01	.417	.497	6	
1,090	1,000 ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	64.9	0.00	6	1161	1151	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.000	.091	3	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR															
1348				1348	1037027	3434505	INDEX NUMBER : 110.99								CHANGE : 0.363
GRAND TOTAL															
1943				1943	1529921	3004879	INDEX NUMBER : 199.78								CHANGE : -0.507

Customs, taxes seen main barriers to the development of Jordanian textile industry

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — When the Department of Customs exempted a local garment manufacturer near Zarqa from roughly JD4,000 in customs on sewing needles, accountants and managers weren't particularly thankful, perhaps because the JD4,000 is but a drop in the ocean of customs that the company pays in customs annually.

"If the government wants to help [the textiles] industry grow," says Al Zay key shareholder Costa Yaghnem, "it should exempt us, in part or in whole, from the JD250,000 that we pay each year importing fabrics and accessories."

Within the span of five years, Al Zay — a joint venture between Mr. Yaghnem, his partners and an Italian company — has become perhaps the most prominent example of successful medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Jordan.

The Italian partner determines the labels that Al Zay produces — among them Ungaro and Harrods — and purchases 60 per cent of the factory's production for distribution.

Al Zay markets and sells the remaining production under private labels in the United States, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, and markets its own Al Zay brand in Jordan with addi-

tional pilot projects in Beirut, Jeddah, Bahrain and Abu Dhabi.

Al Zay is likely to weather the onslaught of free trade agreements, the establishment of the Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) at Irbid and the taxes imposed on textiles and accessories far more easily than the country's 1,484 small to medium size garment manufacturers who mainly supply clothing to the local market. Even still, says Mr. Yaghnem, a clear policy on the industry would be "helpful."

"This industry employs about 11,000 people," says Thauraya Sali, who recently completed a comprehensive study on the competitiveness of the industry. "We have to decide now if this industry is important to us or not and set a clear policy that supports these SMEs, that will help them restructure and be able to keep up in an era of no protection. Until now, these SMEs are facing a bleak future."

At present, the study asserts, many factories are now operating at a mere 20-30 per cent of capacity and several have closed their doors.

A lack of skilled labour and a dependence on imported textiles and accessories (buttons, zippers, hooks, etc.) have hindered the development of the sector, says Ms. Sali, while the official policy of imposing exorbitant taxes

on imported garments hasn't encouraged manufacturers to serve anything other than the local market, whose demand is generally for low-cost, low-quality goods.

"As a consequence, neither the industry nor the labour force have upgraded. Nor have supporting industries been created," she says. "Now, the customs policy — which is inconsistent anyway — is changing and free trade agreements are threatening these manufacturers in their own market."

Manufacturers complain that they pay up to 40 per cent customs on imported fabrics, while finished apparel imported from countries enjoying trade protocols with Jordan, such as Syria, enter customs-free while used clothing also enjoys a customs discount.

On top of this, the duty imposed on imported clothing from, say, Europe or Asian countries, is shrinking, and along with it, the customs differential. In 1997, the customs schedule was 35 per cent on imported textiles and 60 per cent on garments — a differential of 25 per cent.

Later that year, both were lowered: to 30 per cent on imported textiles and to 40 per cent on garments — a differential of only ten per cent.

Manufacturers say that if they could allocate the money squandered on customs, there is a potential to expand their operations,

upgrade their products and export.

"It's a vicious cycle. Most manufacturers never make enough profit to 'get fat enough' to upgrade and begin exporting," says Ms. Sali. "We have to eliminate customs on our inputs, or we have to let other countries abide by the regular schedule so that [our garments] compete on an equal footing."

Some SMEs do export, she says, but the sector's export growth rate is very fluctuating.

The study shows that 23 per cent of the industry's production is exported, but only one per cent of the medium-sized industries' production is exported while small enterprises don't export at all, indicating that the lion's share of exports are produced by the two large-scale joint ventures to Irbid, which are totally export-oriented.

"Around 80-90 per cent [of the two large QIZ companies'] production is exported," says Ms. Sali. "The medium-sized are very inconsistent — one day they have an order, the next day they don't."

With a minimal amount of assistance, she says, medium-sized might be able to attract joint venture partners and begin exporting.

Mohammad Abu Tarboush, whose Dana Tricot factory is on the outskirts of Bayader Wadi Seer, says he would gladly upgrade to at least a medium-size venture, if he could find the opportunity. Dana Tricot exports a small quantity of apparel "occasionally" to northern Europe, he says, but because profits are not enough to expand operations, his small capacity cannot meet the requirements of potential clients abroad.

"[Companies] are penalised for supplying the local market," says Ms. Sali. "They are taxed on everything, while the few exporters we have are getting all the breaks."

"These small companies — which import almost all of their inputs, also do not understand all these free trade agreements (FTAs)," she says. "They don't have access to information and they don't have time to sit and analyse what they mean, so they don't know how to access markets. Someone has to get responsible and put these into a simple and readable form so [manufacturers] can take advantage."

Both Mr. Yaghnem and Mr. Abu Tarboush admit being

"frustrated" by the creation of the QIZ, and the pace at which Jordan is moving towards free trade.

"I somehow felt that, although I've been in business since 1990s, I was less 'Jordanian' because I am located in Wadi Seer," says Mr. Tarboush. "Why them and no one else? When people drafted [the QIZ agreement] and the Economic Association Agreement with the EU no one consulted our industry."

Al Zay, which has been exporting to the U.S. since it entered into its joint venture and long before the QIZ ever became part of the local lingo, now finds itself at a disadvantage to the manufacturers in QIZ.

"I am not against the QIZ," says Mr. Yaghnem. "On the contrary, I think it's great — it opens markets. But why were we excluded from it?"

Ms. Sali is more optimistic about the impact of the FTAs and is an enthusiastic supporter of the QIZ, both of which, she maintains, have the potential to upgrade the industry as a whole. But even in these areas, she explains, the advantages will be compromised unless Jordan develops a more comprehensive approach to maintain them. Jordan's advantages in the QIZ and with the EU will end in the year 2005 when the textile treaty of the WTO and the Multi-Fibre Agreement come into effect. After that time, Jordan will no longer benefit from the "no-quota" offered by the U.S. for goods coming out of the QIZ since the global textiles industry will be liberalised.

"At the moment, we have an 'artificial' feeling of being the best," she says. "We sell and praise ourselves for cheap labour and low cost of production, but this is short-sighted."

The nature of garment manufacturing is that production can easily shift from country to country, she points out, and it is as easy for a company to come to Jordan as it is to leave.

"Look at Korea," she says. "Labour costs eventually began to increase and then it became too high to be attractive, so production shifted to China and now everyone is setting up in China. In Bangladesh, the cost of labour is 10 cents an hour. Here, it's 50 cents."

Jordan has two choices, Ms. Sali explains: To exploit a short-term benefit as a step to shore up employment, or to

develop some specialised competency that will make the industry a sustainable one.

"If we go for the short-term benefit, with subcontracting arrangements, these companies will leave in 2005," she says, warning that the effect "believe me, will be dramatic. We need a book."

A "book" may be better quality, efficient ports, computerised logistics or production of brand names. Italy's sustainable position in the industry, she points out, was built on its reputation of high quality brand names and quick response to demand. This philosophy applies to manufacturers within and outside the industrial zones.

"Cheap labour is just not sustainable," she says. Massive investments in the zone — set to be expanded in Irbid and to other areas — may also create an environment in which supporting and related industries could be developed, she says.

Another consequence of their presence, if investors think strategically, will be the eventual creation of a sophisticated labour pool (that eventually takes its skill and knowhow to smaller companies) and the capability to work independently to develop and export brands.

The future of the industry will be one of two extremes, says Ms. Sali, and manufacturers themselves support her claim that the onus of restructuring the industry lies mainly with the government but also requires a coordinated and proactive effort from industrialists themselves.

"We need to merge in order to accommodate large orders," says Mr. Tarboush, who admits his own experience in sharing work with other manufacturers has often degenerated into a scenario of too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

"They can also share marketing costs and technical expertise," says Ms. Sali. "This is a parallel process between the government and the industry. But they really do need the help, support and a clear policy from officials."

In addition to a reduction in customs, says Mr. Tarboush, Jordan needs good training facilities and a school for designers.

"We don't want the government to do everything, but we want it to point in the direction that it wants us to go so we can formulate our own strategies and move in that direction."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You and your teammates will have to know how to play the game in order to win this one. Your focus has to be completely on the task. Promise a loved one something special later, to make up for time not spent together now.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're up against difficulties again today. These problems are not insurmountable. You'll have to set priorities, but you don't need to do it all by yourself. A well-organised loved one will be a great asset.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Everybody's interested in your private life today, but that's OK. You enjoy the attention and appreciate the help. Domestic issues are interfering with your work, but it doesn't seem to be much of a problem.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) To achieve the position you want and deserve, you're going to have to practice. This could turn out to be fun, since it is your talent area. If it's not fun, you're obviously not doing the right thing — or you're not doing it the right way.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There could be quite a lot of money coming into your account today. This is not entirely by accident, although some of it may be. This is also good day to get your jewelry reassessed. Some of those heirlooms may be worth more than you thought.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You seem to attract attention. That's not necessarily what you want, if it's any comfort, you virtually disappear when you're doing your job well. When your ego gets out of the way, there's nothing there but your skill and your desire for perfection.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) What's the most important thing in your life? Odds are, it's not what you've been doing lately. The most important thing probably has something to do with serving others. Contribute to making the world a better place and you'll feel better, too.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Focus on something other people need, again. You might be able to get rid of a few outgrown household items in the process. By donating your castoffs to a worthy cause, and volunteering your helps as well, you can do a valuable service.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your career demands all your attention and then some. You have the information you need, but you may not know how to access it. Just do the best job you possibly can right now and the rewards will be numerous.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) There may be difficulties, but you'll be travelling soon. Allow time for delays, detours or inclement weather. Don't dip too deeply into your resources, however. Use your brains instead of your chequebook to get what you want.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There's money going out today, possibly to pay taxes. If you go over the records again, you could save a little more. If you've got an accountant working on this project with you, request another review before you sign the cheque.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Instead of resisting a person who's been nagging you, turn the situation around. This one knows how to do several things better than you do, so why don't you simply ask him or her to do a few chores for you? Give it a try.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Rhodia 'New Name,' 'New Brand'

On the occasion of the creation of Rhodia Company for speciality chemicals a press conference was held in Bristol Hotel / Beirut at the beginning of this month to announce a prize for environmental preservation which "Rhodia" (New subsidiary of RP-Group) will grant to the Lebanese press for the best work on the subject. Similar contests will be organised in the future across the region.

In his opening speech, Mr. Antoine Sacy the Director General for Rhodia Middle-East briefed the audience on the nature of the prize.

Afterwards Mr. JP Tirouflet / President of the giant French Company delivered a presentation about the activities of the company, explaining the reorganisation of the group Rhone Poulenc since January 1st, 1998 where Rhone Poulenc



Chemicals Grouped with Fibers and Polymers into one entity of speciality chemicals called "Rhodia" with a turn over of 37 billion French Franc, employing 25000 people around the world, which includes the following divisions:

- Specialities for industrial products
- Specialities for consumer products

- Fine organics
 - Polyamide
 - Services and specialities
- The press conference was followed by a cocktail reception attended by some prestigious business men and entrepreneurs from the region, also attending was engineer Alija Qarain Hussein/commercial director of Rhodia East / Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- United force
- Nora's pooch
- Anti-Puritan garb
- Present starter?
- Casual talk
- Ordinary
- Toe tip
- Stoic philosopher
- Eighth Greek letter
- Thin wrapping paper
- Buddhist sect
- Rosebay
- Green Bay's state abbr.
- chart
- Marina facilities
- Pneist vestment
- Depends on
- Writer Seton
- Gauche's cattle-catcher
- Word within 20A, 58A, 11D, and 33D
- Stairs' transport
- Jewish month
- Ruling class
- Miserables
- Rip van Winkle, e.g.
- Biblical judge
- Withered
- Not in residence
- R-V connection
- Lay down the law militarily
- Roddy ridge
- Seaweed product
- Son of Seth
- Splashes in the shallows
- Remainder
- Tissue mass
- Exhausted
- Liberal
- Very in French

DOWN

- Lone Ranger's pal

Peanuts



Andy Capp

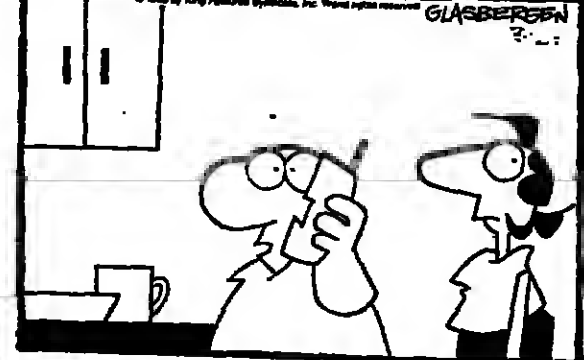


Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen



"Every month we have just enough money to pay your bill—but no money left over to buy a stamp."

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

IRROG

GUVEA

CLARRO

TALLEB

Answer: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: MADAM WOMEN JERSEY VIABLE

Answer: What the citizens did when their beach was littered — MADE WAVES

First Division Basketball Championship Jazireh, Orthodoxi battle for lead

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Basketball fans are expected to fill the Sports Palace tonight when titleholders Al Jazireh take on Al Orthodoxi in the top clash of the First Division championship playoffs currently underway.

Victory Saturday will take the winning team halfway to the champions' podium as both teams are tied in overall points and will be meeting again in the second playoff match later this month.

Al Orthodoxi now lead the standings on points after turning their first half 33-34 loss to a 84-61 win over all-time rivals Al Ahli.

Al Jazireh also beat Al Ahli 78-63 (33-32) in the playoffs ruling out the lat-

ter's chance of keeping their runner-up place which they took last year leaving Al Orthodoxi third.

After losing to the top two teams in the preliminary rounds and the playoffs, Al Ahli are now third and are destined to stay there in the final standings.

With the other playoff round starting April 25, Al Ahli's poor physical conditioning and incomplete bench have forced them to rely on the individual efforts of Faisal Nsour and Yousef Zaghloul.

The lineup has been depleted with Mohammad Shmali and Marwan Ma'touq both nursing injuries, and centre Ramez Hammoudab quitting the team for personal reasons.

The team is suffering the ill-effects of inadequate pre-season training which led to an inconsistent form, after officials concentrated more on technicalities like recruiting a coach and luring back veterans to the lineup.

In the preliminary round, Al Jazireh beat Al

Orthodoxi 92-84 and lost 73-69. However, they managed to beat Al Ahli twice 75-69, and 57-53.

After ending Al Orthodoxi's 1976-1989 undisputed reign, Al Ahli were champions in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996 and Al Jazireh ended a 30-year domination among the two rivals last season.

PLAYOFF STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	Sf	Sa	Pts
Orthodoxi	11	10	1	921	599	21
Jazireh	11	10	1	968	645	21
Ahli	12	6	6	796	768	18

Prince to keep his chin out of trouble

MANCHESTER (AFP) — When Prince Naseem Hamed puts his WBO featherweight title on the line against Puerto Rico's Wilfredo Vazquez here on Saturday, keeping his chin out of trouble will be his number one priority.

Hamed found himself on the canvas during a desperate opening round in his United States debut in December when he fought Kevin Kelly. Hamed shook his head clear and stormed back to win but he dare not expose himself to Vazquez in the same fashion as he defends his title for the 10th time.

Despite his advancing years the Puerto Rican is a damaging puncher and any mistake by Hamed could cost him dearly.

Therefore, Hamed's approach against a tough campaigner of 60 fights and 50 victories, 37 of them inside schedule, will be the most intriguing factor of the pay-per-view television fight.

Will there still be an large element of bravado? After all, a rapid victory over a man of Vazquez's stature would look good on his record.

And that could only enhance Hamed's reputation in America, where he is due to return for an 11th title defence on July 18, the third stage of his 19million dollar six-fight deal with cable network Home Box Office.

Newly-wed Naz, soon to become a father, said: "You've got to respect a world champion like Vazquez. He's had the WBA title, lost it, won it back and fought some good men. I respect him alone because he's come to England to try and take away the WBO belt."

"Vazquez is experienced, but I'll stop him in two rounds, box him in the first, and win in the next round. I'm a lot faster than him. His time has gone and mine is coming up. I've got the power and I can turn a fight with one punch. He hasn't got a hope in hell of winning."

What happened in the heart-stopping minutes against Kelley at Madison Square Garden placed a question mark against Hamed's claim to invincibility.

Kelley acquainted Hamed three times with the canvas, but produced his equaliser to knock out the New Yorker in the fourth.

Hamed's trainer and mentor Brendan Ingle has been urging the Sheffield showman to revert to what he used to do best. Hit hard, certainly, but use his skill and mcanary reflexes to elude the counter punches.

"I don't think I gave anything away when I fought Kelley," added Hamed.

"I don't think I will get hit like I did against Kelley, probably never again. I was so eager and anxious to take him out. I will be boxing, not going to war."

"I told Kelley I wanted war,

he said he wanted war, so we both said 'let's have war'. But making decisions like that before a big fight shouldn't really happen. That was one of the main mistakes.

"You should go out on a box the best way you can box. I will use my head, but I also want the stoppage against Vazquez. I'll probably not get hit.

Vazquez, 37, will bring huge experience into the fight. He has mixed almost exclusively in world class, but had to forfeit the WBA title in order to take this fight, illustrating the extent of the political web presently entangling the world organisations.

This will be the Puerto Rican's 22nd world title fight, 19 for the WBA crown and one apiece for the WBC and IBF, and has been beaten only once since 1990.

But his last fight against the Nicaraguan Genaro Rios in Las Vegas last November was shrouded in controversy. Vazquez somewhat fortunately took the verdict, but he looked a lot slower and the years may be catching up.

Vazquez's chin is pretty sound, but he has been sent tumbling twice in his long career, the last time against Israel Contreras eight years ago when he did not wake up until he got back to the dressing room.

It is that shortfall on speed which could be conclusive. And it is unlikely that Vazquez has met anyone with the power and reflexes of Hamed in recent years.

On the same hill, Britain's former light-middleweight world champion Chris Eubank will try to dethrone WBO light heavyweight Carl Thompson and Norfolk's WBO heavyweight champion Herbie Hide will make his first defence against modest American Damon Reed.

Ahmad Daoud makes successful comeback

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Ahmad Daoud and co-driver Malek Hariri were crowned champions of the first of four national rallies organised by the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) for the 1998 season.

Daoud, who was Jordanian champion in 1996, drove his Ford Escort Cosworth to a smooth finish after several participants had to retire in early stages. Ibrahim Mouhawesh and co-driver Nasser Statawi in a Ford Escort Cosworth came in the second, and Faris Bustami and co-driver Rafi Bilemjan in a Ford Sierra Cosworth came third.

Only eight drivers took part in the event covering a distance of 211 kilometres of which 66km were distributed on 10 special stages with tough terrain on the Amman-Jerash road.

The participants passed through Iraq Al Amir, Siyagha, Mousa Springs and Mahes.

Jordan's 1997 champion Mohammad Daoud did not participate in the rally for being out of the country while Assem Aref missed the event as he is in Saudi Arabia on pilgrimage.

The rally witnessed several cars quitting the race as Bashar Bustami, Mohammad Shamaileh and Mohammad Qirm quit in the fifth stage followed by Amar Haddad who retired in the sixth stage.

Amjad Farah and co-driver Faisal Sa'doun had an accident in their Ford Sierra Cosworth but no major damage was reported.

The rally lacked the women's touch as no women team took part in this event.

His Royal Highness Prince Faisal closely followed the race and lauded RACJ for a job well done.

Meanwhile Jordan's Maya Mufti will make her debut in an international rally scene on May 2 partnered by Lebanese co-driver Hala Nasser Al Dein in a Nissan Pulsar.

Mufti, who is going to be part of Rally du Liban, marks the first Jordanian women who will compete in a national rally abroad.

Gambill, Black advance to Japan Open semis

TOKYO (AFP) — With the exit of third seed Tim Henman on Friday, Byron Black and Jan-Michael Gambill, 10th and 11th seeds respectively, found themselves the top remaining players in the semi-finals of the Japan Open tennis tournament.

Henman, ranked 15th against Gambill's 81st, fell victim to the American's risky hard shots from the baseline with Gambill winning 6-3, 4-6, 6-3.

The Briton joined the tournament's top two seeds, current U.S. Open champion Patrick Rafter of Australia and 1989 French Open champion Michael Chang of the United States to go out, leaving Black and Gambill the last two.

Tenth seed Black, fresh from Zimbabwe's historic victory over Australia in the Davis Cup tie two weeks ago, fought off a hard-hitting Hendrik Dreekmann of Germany for a 6-2, 6-3 win. "I feel my best weapon today was my returns and my baseline play in general," said Gambill, whose attacking double-fisted ground strokes were the basis of his victory over Henman in the 105-minute match.

A disappointed Henman said: "I don't think really either of us played particularly well. There were times when I played better, but my problem was I didn't execute the shots that I had to."

Black needed just 70 minutes to repeat his second round performance over Dreekmann.

In the semi-finals Saturday, Gambill will play 16th seed Andrei Pavel of Romania, who defeated American qualifier David Dilucia 6-3, 7-6 (7/4).

Black will take on 12th seed Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic, the winner over David Prinosil of Germany 6-4, 6-1.

On the women's side, defending champion Ai Sugiyama kept the local hopes alive by beating American Erika De Lone 4-6, 6-1, 6-1, setting up a semi-final meeting against Taiwan's number one Wang Shi-ting.

Wang was a 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 winner over 1991 Japan Open champion Lori McNeil of the United States.

The other match will be played between the 1995 Japan Open winner and three-time runner-up, Amy Frazier, and fellow American Corina Morariu.

Wihdat win 17th Cup Winners' Cup

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

Cup Winners' Cup record

AMMAN — Al Wihdat Friday kicked off the 1998 soccer season with a 4-2 win over Al Ramtha in the season-opening Cup Winners' Cup.

Al Wihdat led 2-0 at half-time, and their rivals then trailed 3-1 and lost definite chances before losing the match anned by Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Sa'an Al Hassan, Jordan Soccer Federation officials and over 15,000 fans.

The match traditionally groups the Premier League and Jordan Cup champions of the preceding year. Since Al Wihdat won the 1997 Premier League and Jordan Cup titles, their opponents were Jordan Cup runners-up Al Ramtha.

It was Al Wihdat's fourth Cup Winners' Cup title after winning the trophy in 1989, 1992 and 1997. Al Faisali hold the record with 10 titles.

1981 — Faisali
1982 — Faisali
1983 — Ramtha
1984 — Faisali
1985 — Jazireh
1986 — Faisali
1987 — Faisali
1989 — Wihdat
1990 — Ramtha
1991 — Faisali
1992 — Wihdat
1993 — Faisali
1994 — Faisali
1995 — Faisali
1996 — Faisali
1997 — Wihdat
1998 — Wihdat

The match was a repeat of last year's as Al Wihdat won the 1997 title with a 2-0 victory over Al Ramtha. Al Ramtha's last major title was the 1996 Federation Shield.

Action is now back on the Kingdom's soccer scene as the Premier League is scheduled to start April 20 with ten teams taking part

with the last two relegated to the First Division.

The Jordan Cup is scheduled for mid-June and will group 40 teams representing the Premier League as well as the first and second divisions.

The competition will be held on a knockout basis with most of the Premier league teams playing in the second round.

The fourth major event of the season will be the Federation Shield, grouping the Premier League only and also played on a knockout basis in mid-July.

Other competitions have already begun including the second indoor competition grouping Premier League teams.

The first Division groups 14 teams with the top two moving to the Premier League and the last two relegated to the second division. The Second Division has 16 teams and the third 62.



Spain's Alberto Berasategui returns a ball to Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov during their quarter-finals match at the Barcelona Open tennis tournament. No. 7 seed Berasategui beat top-seeded Kafelnikov 6-4 6-4 to qualify for the semi-finals (Reuters photo)

Jordan Times
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The closing date for submitting bids is 12:00 hours
local time Sunday, 3rd May, 1998.
Sameh Madani
Managing Director

Knicks clinch playoff berth

NEW YORK (AP) — Larry Johnson, playing on two sore ankles, scored 26 points and the New York Knicks clinched a playoff berth Thursday night with a 108-79 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Chris Mills added 21 points for the Knicks, who won for the second time in their last seven games, while Allan Houston had 14 and Chris Childs 13.

A three-point play by Buck Williams with 16 seconds left in the first quarter made it 29-27 and put New York ahead for good, and the Knicks opened the second quarter with six layups and two 3-pointers by John Starks to expand their lead to double digits. Doug Christie led the Raptors with 14 points.

Jazz 99, Kings 86: In Salt Lake City, Karl Malone had 21 points and eight rebounds and Utah improved the NBA's best record to 61-19.

The Jazz moved a game

ahead of Chicago and Seattle (60-20) for home-court advantage throughout the playoffs.

The Jazz opened a 20-point second-quarter lead. The Kings made a 22-10 run in the third quarter and cut Utah's lead to eight points, but the Jazz scored five points in the final two seconds of the quarter. Greg Osiertag tipped in a shot with two seconds to play, and Howard Easley stole Sacramento's inbound pass and made a 3-pointer from near midcourt as time expired.

Utah won its 12th straight home game and finished with a 36-5 home record. Tariq Abdul-Wahad and Corliss Williamson each had 14 points for Sacramento, which lost its ninth straight road game.

Spurs 110, Grizzlies 97: In Vancouver, British Columbia, Tim Duncan had 32 points and 10 rebounds as the San Antonio Spurs beat the Vancouver

Grizzlies 110-97 Thursday night.

Duncan also had six assists and six blocked shots as the Spurs completed a season sweep of the Grizzlies.

Jaren Jackson had 20 points for San Antonio, while Will Perdue had 18 points and 10 rebounds. Reggie Geary came off the bench for 13 points.

Shareef Abdur-Rahim led Vancouver with a season-high 32 points.

Trail Blazers 99, Clippers 90: In Portland, Oregon, Rasheed Wallace scored 11 of his 21 points in the decisive third quarter to lead Portland over Los Angeles.

The Blazers outscored the Clippers 27-16 in the third quarter and led 77-68 entering the fourth quarter. The Clippers cut the lead to seven points with 6:58 remaining on Ike Austin's basket, but the Blazers scored the next seven points — five by Isaiah Rider —

for the win.

Arvydas Sabonis had 20 points and 12 rebounds for his 36th double-double of the season, while Rider and Damon Stoudamire each scored 17.

The Clippers were led by Austin's 23 points and 11 rebounds.

Warriors 88, Mavericks 82: In Oakland, California, Jim Jackson scored 25 points, including a game-clinching layup with 18.8 seconds left, as Golden State used a game-ending 10-2 run to defeat Dallas.

Golden State (18-63) won consecutive games for just the fourth time this season and will go into Saturday's game against Vancouver looking for its first three-game winning streak of the year.

Delk scored 22 and Dampier added 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Warriors. Michael Finley led Dallas with 20 points.



Lokomotiv Moscow's Alexei Kosolapov (R) stretches to the ball as he fights with Stuttgart Germany's Krasimir Balakov during their Cup Winners Cup semifinal second leg match (Reuters photo)

European Cup Winners' Cup Chelsea's Hughes hits winner for showdown with Stuttgart

LONDON (AFP) — Chelsea substitute Mark Hughes hit the winner for a 3-1 fightback victory over Vicenza in the European Cup Winners Cup semifinal here on Thursday.

Hughes, who also scored the winner for Manchester United in the 1991 European Cup Winners Cup final, completed an impressive turnaround as the London club now face VfB Stuttgart, who beat Lokomotiv Moscow 3-1 on aggregate, in the May 13 final in Stockholm.

Chelsea are reported to be on a £100,000 (about \$160,000) victory bonus per man and they earned every penny at Stamford Bridge.

Pasquale Luiso hit the opener in the 32nd minute to put them 2-0 ahead on aggregate meaning Chelsea had to score three for victory. But three strikes did not prove an unreasonable target as Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet equalized within three minutes and Gianfranco Zola then Hughes hit further goals in the second half.

Vicenza had Massimo Ambrosini sent off three minutes from the end after being shown his second yellow card by referee Marc Batta of France for a bad tackle on Gianluca Vialli but by then Chelsea were firmly in control.

After Luiso's goal, drilled into the top corner, Poyet gave Chelsea a glimmer of hope by knocking in a rebound for the equaliser on the night to mark his first start since rupturing a knee ligament in October.

Graeme Le Saux's left-wing cross was beaten out only as far as Zola at the edge of the box. His drive was also blocked but Poyet was ideally placed to put away the rebound. Zola blew the

match wide open and almost lifted the roof off Stamford Bridge with a glorious header to put Chelsea within one goal of their target six minutes into the second half.

He owed most of it to a thrilling run by Vialli who skated down the right after Vicenza gave the ball away and sent over a wonderful far-post cross which Zola met at full tilt to explode into the net with his header.

As the Chelsea pressure mounted, coach Graham Rix made a double substitution — sending on Mark Hughes and Laurent Charvet in place of Morris and Newton.

The move brought almost immediate dividends when Hughes snapped up the crucial third goal for Chelsea on 76 minutes. De Goey's long clearance was headed on by the Welshman 30 yards out and he then spun his marker to run on and launch an unstoppable half-volley that put Chelsea in the final.

VfB Stuttgart striker Fredi Bobic was once again a jinx player against Lokomotiv Moscow as he scored the only goal in their 1-0 win in front of 22,000 fans in Moscow. It was the Slovenia-born Bobic, now a member of the German national squad, who scored the winner in VfB Stuttgart's 2-1 first-leg victory in Germany two weeks ago. A confident Bobic had warned the Russian's before the match.

"We have only come here to do one thing, win," announced the 26-year-old Bobic, who has scored 12 goals in the Bundesliga and now six in Europe this season. But there was bad news for the German side. Defenders Martin Spanning and Frank Verlaet were both

booked by Danish referee Kim Milton Nielsen to collect their second yellow card of the tournament and will miss the May 13 final against Chelsea.

Coach Joachim Low was particularly disappointed about Verlaet's omission. "Verlaet played superbly," Low said. "His absence will weigh heavily on us."

Stuttgart's last appearance in the UEFA Cup final was a 5-4 aggregate loss to a Diego Maradona-inspired Napoli in 1989.

"The final will be a great occasion for the coach and the players," said Stuttgart president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder. "I have been president for 22 years and we have reached a European final for a second time."

That is an incredible achievement. Mayer-Vorfelder gave his underfire coach guarantees about his job. "We will continue with Low till the end of the season," he said to quell rumours that Low was to be axed to make way for Nuremberg coach Felix Magath.

Meanwhile Bobic said: "It was a tough match. The pitch was not as bad as the Spartak Moscow/Inter Milan match but it was pretty poor. But it has been an incredible success. A player cannot imagine anything better than this and we are all really looking forward to the final in Stockholm."

It was also a special day for goalkeeper Franz Wohlfahrt as his daughter Conny was also celebrating her 10th birthday. "It is an unbelievable feeling," said Wohlfahrt, whose goal was hardly threatened during the match.

Robson in Gazza plea to Hoddle

MIDDLESBROUGH (AFP) — Middlesbrough manager Bryan Robson is to ask England boss Glenn Hoddle to excuse star players Paul Gascoigne and Paul Merson from international duty against Portugal next week.

Both Boro players have been called up for Wednesday's Wembley clash but could be back in action for the First Division promotion-chasers just 48 hours later when their club meet Port Vale.

"I don't know what is in Glenn's mind and I'll contact him to see what his intentions are regarding Gazza and Merse," said Robson.

"England play on Wednesday and we play on Friday. There is no problem about them turning up to join the squad, they have the weekend off anyway."

Bobic once again Lokomotiv's jinx

MOSCOW (AFP) — VfB Stuttgart striker Fredi Bobic was once again a jinx player against Lokomotiv Moscow as he scored the only goal in their 1-0 European Cup Winners Cup semi-final win in front of 22,000 fans here on Thursday.

It was the Slovenia-born Bobic, now a member of the German national squad, who scored the winner in VfB Stuttgart's 2-1 first-leg victory in Germany two weeks ago. A confident Bobic had warned the Russian's before the match.

"We have only come here to do one thing, win," announced the 26-year-old Bobic, who has scored 12 goals in the Bundesliga and now six in Europe this season. But there was bad news for the German side. Defenders Martin Spanning and Frank Verlaet were both booked by Danish referee Kim Milton Nielsen to collect their second yellow card of the tournament and will miss the May 13 final in Paris against Chelsea.

'Crazy Gang' out to spoil Arsenal title push

LONDON (AFP) — An irresistible force will meet an immovable object on Saturday when Arsenal aim to overhaul Manchester United at the top of the English Premiership with victory over party-poopers Wimbledon.

Arsenal, who have two games in hand over United, have closed the gap on the reigning champions to just one point following a remarkable streak of form of 11 wins and three draws in their last 14 league matches. And Monday's 4-1 demolition of Blackburn, a team built on strong defence and sound organisation, left most pundits wondering whether there was any team who could now stop the Gunners' relentless drive to the championship title.

But if anyone can,

Wimbledon can.

The south London outfit have a history of spoiling the day for England's more glamorous clubs with their non-sensational approach to the game.

Their pranks and spoiling tactics — including putting salt in the opposition's tea at half-time — are legendary and though they have shed much of their 'Crazy Gang' image, they remain a team that others hate to play.

Joe Kinnear's men are currently enjoying a mini streak of good form themselves which has seen them not concede a single goal in their last four matches, including three goalless home draws and a 1-0 win at Southampton.

In total, the Dons have let in only 15 goals away from home all season.

Arsenal's watertight defence — 28 goals conceded in 32 league games — are unlikely to be troubled by the Dons' misfiring strikers. But on Arsenal's notoriously small Highbury pitch the home side could find it hard work trying to break down the visitors, especially if, as expected, the Dons put most men behind the ball.

Wimbledon also have a superb record at Highbury where a Vinnie Jones goal guided them to a 1-0 victory last season. Ceri Hughes is confident that Wimbledon can shut out Arsenal Wenger's men with a draw that would all but guarantee their survival in the Premiership and blow a major hole in Arsenal's hopes of a League and Cup Double.

"Arsenal are on for the Double, and I'm sure they'll be up for it — but any team that play us know that they're going to get a difficult game," says the midfielder. "Having beaten Arsenal there last year, I'm sure they'll be a bit wary of us. We'll do our homework on them and hopefully come away with a point or even a win."

United, meanwhile, face Newcastle at Old Trafford which — in theory — should prove to be a difficult encounter. But Newcastle's form has been so poor this season that the reigning champions should win at a canter and preserve their slender lead over the Gunners.

But Kenny Dalglish's side, who scraped a 2-1 win over fellow strugglers Barnsley on Monday, are still not guaranteed Premiership football next season and they will need no extra motivation against the team who pipped them for the title in 1996.

United are likely to be without Ryan Giggs who suffered a recurrence of his hamstring injury in last week's 1-1 home draw against Liverpool while Ronny Johnsen could be set to miss the rest of the season with an ankle injury.

Down at the bottom of the table, Barnsley and Tottenham meet in a crucial relegation clash in which defeat for either side would virtually condemn them to first division football next season.

Federation Cup setback for Russians

PERTH (AFP) — Russia's preparations for their Federation Cup tie against Australia, starting here Saturday, were thrown into confusion after their number two singles player, Ekaterina Sysoeva, became ill.

Sysoeva, 16, developed nausea early Friday and was whisked away from the city block immediately after the draw for the world group 11 first round ties, without even attending the brief media conference.

"I hope it is not a serious problem, but we will not know until later," said Russian captain Konstantin Bogorodsky.

Sysoeva's team-mate, Tatiana Panova, was more confident, saying: "I think she'll be fine for tomorrow."

Sysoeva's sickness is a further blow for the Russians, already reeling after the withdrawal of their regular top two players, Anna Kournikova and Elena Likhovtseva.

Sysoeva, ranked 399th in the world, is scheduled to play Rachel McQuillan (60th) in Saturday's second singles clash. In the opening meeting of the tie Saturday, Panova, ranked 83rd, comes up against Kerry-Anne Guse (65th).

In the reverse singles Sunday, Panova takes on McQuillan, while Sysoeva plays Guse.

In Sunday's doubles, Sysoeva and Anastasia Myskina confront McQuillan and Renae Stubbs.

Australian captain Lesley Bowrey was pleased with the draw. "We're confident and ready to go," she said. "If the girls play as well as they have been this week, I'm confident they will win the tie."

Bowrey conceded the singles selection had been difficult, especially in view of the unlucky Annabel Ellwood's excellent lead-up.

"In the end, Rachel and Kerry-Anne had the runs on the board with their most recent grass court campaign," she said.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMAR HIRSCH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AAKJ3 QJ9874 OK A87

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What do you bid now?

A - Although your side almost certainly does not have an eight-card spade fit, a reverse bid of two spades is still the easiest way to describe your hand — your suit is a little weak for a jump to three hearts, which is no longer forcing anyway. When you rebid your hearts on the third round, partner will know you have a strong 4-5 in the majors.

Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AQ4 QK74 QAJ1093 AAK

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What do you bid now?

A - Your doubleton queen of spades might or might not be of any value. Even so, to bid anything less than four hearts now would be a gross dereliction of duty, and we don't want to be accused of that. You have enough distributional assets and trump support to compensate for that possible deficit.

Q. 3 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

Avoid QAK932 :982 AAKQ87

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What do you bid now?

A - The bidding has not developed as well as you might have hoped. Still you have to complete the description of your hand, and the logical way to proceed is to confirm a second five-card suit. Rebid four clubs.

Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What do you bid now?

A - Whether or not you play fourth-suit forcing, you should bid two hearts to see how partner reacts. You don't want to bid any number of no trump with a singleton spade and to jump in clubs on four to the jack when you can't be sure partner has a real suit is a little premature.

Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AAJ8 QK743 QAJ10 A886

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 7 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 8 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 9 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 10 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 11 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 12 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 13 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 14 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 15 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 16 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 17 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 18 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 19 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 20 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.

Q. 21 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKK82 QAK107 A9884

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1A Pass
2A Pass 2A Pass
3A Pass 3A Pass
What action do you take?

A - With first-round controls in both minor suits and a singleton spade, you are on the borderline between a double and a raise to five hearts. However, the ace and king of diamonds might be detrimental defensively in light of West's preempt in that suit, so we would opt for five hearts.